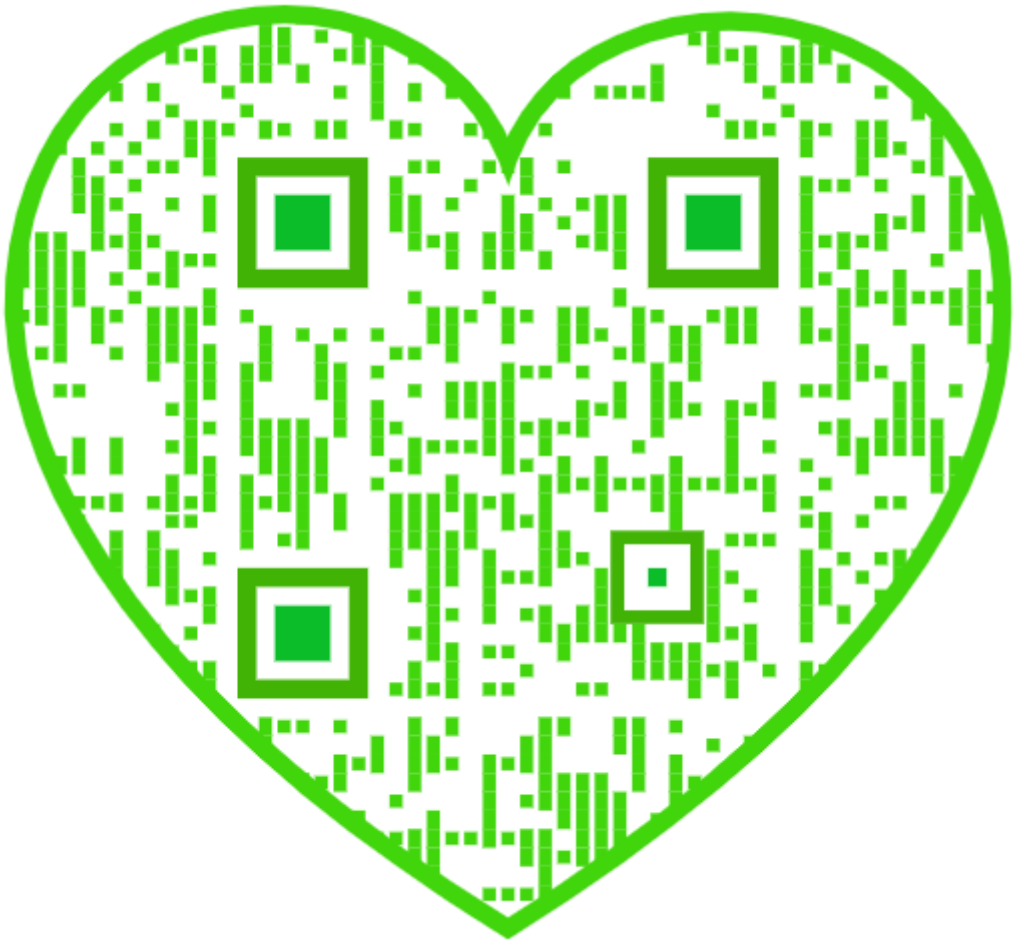

The Ethics of Wagner's The Ring of the Nibelung

By
Mary E. Lewis

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THIS VOLUME IS DEDICATED TO ALL MUSICIANS, BUT IN A SPECIAL SENSE TO THOSE WITH WHOM THIS STUDY WAS MADE.

PREFACE

ONE who casts a glance backward over the history of the world, noting its advancement through savagery, barbarism, and civilization, to its present state of what is, comparatively speaking, knowledge and culture, will readily concede that what we call the human consciousness has not always been what it seems to be at present. It has been a growth or evolution, and, like the individual, has passed through the various stages of infancy, childhood, youth, and maturity.

This volume contains the history of the evolution, or advancement of the thought of the world, as it is set forth in the Music Dramas of the Wagnerian Trilogy, *The Ring of the Nibelung*. This work tells a story in which fictitious personages are eventually seen to represent steps or degrees in the ethical progress of mankind. And the time will come when they will be remembered only in so far as they are the exponents of the moral conditions of an epoch, — concrete embodiments in which the past survives in the present and may live in the future.

This study was made with, and in the interest of, a body of musicians and musically inclined people. At first the characters of *The Ring* appeared to the present writer as a motley assemblage of people who moved in a round of incidents that seemed meaningless or absurd, and, sphinx-like, refused to explain the reasons for their existence. But on closer acquaintance personage after personage, and situation after situation yielded up a meaning and became intelligible.

The author remembers an interesting discussion in which Wotan, Fricka, and Freia were spoken of as emblems analogous to our Uncle Sam and Columbia. These latter personifications do indeed embody certain moral principles that underlie our national life, and may at some future day become as troublesome a subject of analysis as are the figures of *The Ring of the Nibelung*. Students in years to come may be asking: "Who were Uncle Sam, Brother Jonathan, the Goddess of Liberty, and Columbia? What did these figures stand for, and what was their relation one to another?" The American Eagle may be subject to like inquiries. And, with reference to him, curious investigators in ages to come may ask: "Did he, like the ravens of Wotan, fly forth daily, and was he a factor in the government of the people?" As our national emblems stand for moral qualities, so

also each and every character of *The Ring of the Nibelung* stands for some moral quality or the lack of it. And Wagner's great Trilogy, in its moral aspect, as in other aspects, will be found to represent the common experience of mankind, and to be in agreement with many Scriptural utterances concerning man's origin, his devious yet ever upward course, and his inevitable and ultimate destiny. It may therefore be considered as in line with "Whatsoever things are true," and as presenting a panoramic picture of the evolution of the human consciousness struggling to free itself from the hampering conditions of self, until at last, selfless, it is lost in the Divine will.

To students of the Trilogy who seek in that work for a logical and coherent ethical doctrine, the question must often arise: "Did Wagner himself in truth mean all that we think he meant?" The answer to this must lie in the general assertion that one who discovers a principle or announces a truth can hardly realize its every ramification and application of meaning save in a kind of prophetic vision. Did Franklin foresee the telegraph, the telephone, the graphophone? Moses, the prophets, Shakespeare, brought many truths to light, and yet was not their realization of these truths general rather than specific? However this may be, every meaning expounded in these pages is either expressed or

implied in the words of the Trilogy, and each successive step in the argument proceeds logically from that which preceded.

The Wagnerian Trilogy is based upon the *Volsunga Saga*, one of the oldest myths in existence. It is found in the *Eddas* which were written in Icelandic, and belongs to a period so far distant that its date cannot be fixed. As elsewhere stated in this volume, Carlyle places this general period as "unknown thousands" of years in the past.

Wagner altered the old story somewhat to suit his purposes. According to the present version, two children, twins, a boy and a girl of heroic birth (born of gods and men), are separated in infancy, reared apart and unknown, and united in maturity in order that their offspring may save or redeem a world. The essential significance attached in this work to the characters of Siegmund and Sieglinda is that of the "masculine" and the "feminine" in human thought and character. It is but just to say that in the latter part of November, 1905, more than three years after the completion of her own work, the author learned that the same idea with regard to these characters had been advanced by William C. Ward in an essay which appeared in 1889 in *The Meister*, a Wagnerian quarterly magazine published in London. This essay, reprinted with modifications in book form as *The*

Nibelung's Ring, made its appearance in 1904. It is interesting in this connection to know that Alice Leighton Cleather and Basil Crump, in their work *The Ring of the Nibelung*, state that the meaning, in the Saga, of the Volsung twins is that of one person in two aspects, and they emphasize the importance of their being so considered in the dramas.

In the Wagnerian account of the relation of brother and sister, there are certain variations from the old legend. The modern poet has purged it somewhat of offense by making their union take place without the Volsung children's knowing of the relationship that existed between them. And further this union is brought about by circumstances that are beyond their control. Indeed Wagner remained faithful, not to the letter, but only to the spirit of the ancient narrative. His own words are proof of this, as when he writes, "You will soon find out what relation my poem bears to the Saga." In another letter, he states that, before writing *Siegfried's Death* (*The Dusk of the Gods*), he had sketched the entire story, and that his idea had been to have one catastrophe—the death of Siegfried—and to place all the material leading up to that event in an introduction. To make *Siegfried's Death* possible he had written *Young Siegfried* only to find that he had made it even more necessary to tell the whole story.

In a letter dated May twelfth, 1852, he says:

"I am more than ever struck with the broad grandeur and beauty of my subject matter. My whole manner of viewing the world has found in it its fullest expression. . . . Nothing higher or more complete can my powers produce."

Under date of October fourteenth, 1852, he writes:

"My principal care is for my Niebelungen poem. It is the only thing that really and powerfully elevates me whenever I give myself up to it. The thought of posterity is repugnant to me, yet even this vain illusion comes to me unawares, when my poem passes from my soul into the world."

And again, thinking of the importance of the theme in its entirety, he declares, in a letter dated November, 1852, that "the whole will be . . . the greatest poem ever written."

The Niebelungen poem, completed in the latter part of December, 1852, and the music that afterwards interpreted it, arose simultaneously in his mind. Composition with him assumed this method: when a poem was completed and he came later to rendering upon paper the harmonies that had thrilled his soul, it was "as a quiet afterpart, without exertion." And the way in which his inspiration came to him is illustrated by what he wrote in a letter of December sixth; he says: "I am completing

the first scene.[1] Strange that not until I begin to compose does the inner significance of my poem reveal itself to me. Everywhere I discover secrets that had until then remained hidden, even to myself."

What can these words signify save that the high intelligence, deep insight, and strong feeling with which the poem was written, drew into it all the elements essential to its perfection?

Solitary, in exile, among the towering peaks that prefigure spiritual freedom, from chaotic ruins, rough-hewn and massive as the rocks that lay around him, Wagner pictured forth this poem which, for comprehensiveness and grasp, for its hints of a far-reaching history, and for its matchless prophecy, stands among poems peerless and alone.

At the end of this volume will be found an appendix which, it is hoped, will be useful to a reader who would understand clearly the allegorical or symbolical significance of the Wagnerian Trilogy.

Quotations from Wagner's letters are from *Richard Wagner's Letters to his Dresden Friends: Theodor Uhlig, William Fisher, and Ferdinand Heine.* Translated by J. D. Shedlock. New York, 1890. All extracts from the libretto of the operas are from the English translation (New York, no date) by H. Corder and F. Corder.

M. E. L.

[1] Music of *Siegfried.*

CONTENTS

PAGE

INTRODUCTION xv

THE RHINE-GOLD—PRELUDE TO THE TRILOGY

CHAPTER

I. —THE THEFT OF THE RHINE-GOLD . 1
II. —THE PRICE OF VALHALLA . . . 9
III.—THE RANSOM OF FREIA . . . 21

THE TRILOGY—THE VALKYRIE

I. —THE HORN OF MEAD 49
II. —THE SPLINTERED SWORD . . . 66
III.—THE SOUL OF THE WOMAN . . . 80

SIEGFRIED

I. —THE NEW SWORD 93
II. —THE DAWN OF SPIRITUAL POWER . 109
III.—THE PERIOD OF PEACE 123

THE DUSK OF THE GODS

PRELUDE—THE END OF TIME . . . 137
I. —THE TEMPTATIONS OF THE WORLD . 144
II. —IN THE MARKET PLACE . . . 155
III.—THE RESTORATION OF THE RHINE-GOLD 166

APPENDIX 181
INDEX 185

INTRODUCTORY

THE music dramas of Richard Wagner present features not found in musical compositions prior to their time. Previous works of the kind had been purely of the nature of operas. They had been lighter in their meaning and form, and were without any necessarily vital connection between the words and the music, which circumstance may be explained by the fact that in many cases the words were written by one person and the music composed by another.

Thus, literary material of surpassing excellence might have been "unequally yoked" to inferior music, or unsuitable literary matter might have weighted and held to earth the soaring tendencies of musical inspiration.

It was part of the genius of this great master to see that there should be entire harmony between the text and the music. He chose only such subjects as were "susceptible of both musical and poetical interpretation." And having

chosen his subjects, he so treated them that the librettos had great literary merit, while the music was their explanation, their elucidation, their completion.

It is related that Wagner at a very early age turned from the study of the diversities of human nature to the study of what was universal in it. And if his dramas are to be understood, it is this universal element that critical analysis should make plain. What, then, the student of Wagner should ask himself, is the essential meaning of these dramas? Are they arbitrary arrangements of events and circumstances, gathered together to please the fancy and to amuse for an idle hour? Or do they satisfy the reason, justify the judgment, and reach the whole man ethically? It is the effort of the present book to demonstrate fully and specifically that an affirmative answer to this last question is the true answer.

We are at once introduced in *The Ring of the Nibelung*, to the old Norse mythology with its dwarfs, its water-maidens, its giants, its gods, and its goddesses — all of them somewhat Teutonized, but still unmistakably Norse. Odin, the great god, has become Wotan, which is the original form of the word, from *Wuotan*, meaning movement. We wonder who or what he was in that far-away pre-historic time? Was he a myth or a man?

The question cannot be answered. His very existence is, according to Carlyle, doubted by Grimm, but it is the opinion of the former that without doubt the first great representative Norseman was called Odin; that that person was the first great thinker,—he who first voiced the hitherto dumb and unexpressed thoughts of his countrymen. Carlyle also suggests that all the divinities of Norse mythology may be but embodiments of the various characteristics of the man Odin,—his thoughts, his fears, his hopes, his dreams, his prophecies. And the same critic is of the opinion that subsequent poets have only rehandled and amplified the myth that came into being in the manner indicated.

But if, as Carlyle surmises, the northern mythology be but the personified traits of Odin, and of the northern races as typified in him, it is not without characteristics that harmonize it somewhat with the religions of the world. It is the expression of a forceful, though pagan, religion, whose watchword was valor, and whose highest rewards were for those who died bravely in battle.

In the music dramas constituting *The Ring*, we have almost every element of fundamental importance in the entire mythology, placed before us in plain coherent form, though regardless, it would seem at first glance, of dramatic and chronological sequence. This apparent

disregard of order disappears, however, on closer examination, and the story is seen to be an intelligible whole, that symbolizes with great precision and power the history and tragedy of the whole human race.

THE RHINE-GOLD

PRELUDE TO THE TRILOGY

THE RHINE-GOLD

PRELUDE TO THE TRILOGY

CHAPTER I

THE THEFT OF THE RHINE-GOLD

(SCENE I)

THE introduction to the Nibelungen Trilogy begins with the story of the theft of the Rhine-gold.[1] Far down among the craggy fissures of the rolling river Rhine, a water-maiden disports herself in merry glee. She is keeping a vigil or watch. Soon she is joined by a sister maiden who swims and dives, and darts hither and thither in playful sport. A little later another Rhine-maiden appears who chides her sisters for their careless watch, for, as we soon are made aware, these graceful creatures are the guardians of a golden treasure.

The two sisters do not consider the words of

[1] The German adjective "rein" means clean, clear, pure, innocent.

the third Rhine-maiden seriously. They laugh, they sport, and chase each other in mirthful gaiety. At this juncture a repulsive dwarf appears from a fissure in the rocks below, and with growing admiration beholds the pretty creatures. Unseen, he begs their permission to come nearer to them. Flosshildr, who seems to be the most serious and earnest of the three, once more chides her sisters as she chid them before, and bids them to beware, reminding them that their father long ago had warned them of exactly such a foe as this.

They are therefore recalled from their frivolity, and rally to the central rock, asking of the dwarf his purpose and his business with them. He replies that he wishes to come nearer to them, and that he seeks to gain their favor.

It gradually dawns upon them that this queer little creature is in love with them, and they become less cautious and lose much of their fear of him. Woglinda calls down to him, and herself descends. He tries to scale the slimy rocks, while Woglinda eludes him and springs from peak to peak, upward and downward, until the dwarf, Alberic—for such is his name—becomes discouraged.

Wellgunda, at this point, bids him leave her sister alone. Discomfited and baffled, he turns to the newcomer, who with merry jeers and laughter escapes easily at his approach.

The watchful Flosshildr is here betrayed into the play, and to her Alberic turns with the most complete admiration and seems lost to the beauties of her sisters. She wheedles and cajoles him until he is near enough to offer her caresses, when she also evades him and joins the other maidens, the three then uniting in peals of merriment. Alberic moans and laments. They call to him that they will be true if he can only hold them. Nearly beside himself, he tries to catch any one of them, until he finally staggers and falls with rage.

Suddenly, at this juncture, a beautiful light overspreads the waters, and gleams with a golden glory from the central rock. The sisters are recalled to their duty and they sing its wondrous beauty and worship its radiant glow. Alberic is lost in wonder at this mystic light. Timidly he asks what it may be. Again they sing its praises and think that he is very simple indeed if he has never heard of the Rhine-gold.

"Is it for use or only for play?" asks Alberic.

They tell him of its mighty worth, and that with a ring shaped from it, one might gain the whole world. Their father, who placed them in charge of the treasure, had so told them, and bade them keep it carefully and safe.

Flosshildr bids her sisters to cease from their

prattling. Regardless of her admonitions, however, they go on and relate that only he who *forswears love* may wield the mighty magic of the ring. With the narration they feel an assured sense of security, for is not this comical little gnome in love with them, one and all? And are not all men like him? And will any man live parted from love? Surely the gold cannot be filched! Thus they are completely disarmed.

Alberic, meanwhile, has forgotten his companions, with their grace, their beauty, their jeers, and their favors. To the ugly, little, despised dwarf, Alberic, has come another dream! The "dream of fair women" has faded, and in its place there glows a dream of gold, of wealth, and of power. He will give up love! In this renunciation he sees himself master of the world!

Spurred on by the taunts of the maidens, with one mighty leap he gains the central peak, snatches the gold, swears to the mighty floods that he will renounce love for ever, and disappears among the slimy fissures of the rocky Rhine.

And the Rhine-daughters? Careless, wanton, trusted yet untrustworthy, they moan and cry and cling to the rugged rocks. In vain they wring their hands, in vain they lament. In the darkened waters of the Rhine must they ever lift their saddened voices and call forever for

their treasure lost? Who shall heed their cries? Who shall listen and give them aid? Who shall restore the treasure with its golden glow? Harmony is broken! Duration is sundered! To-morrow shall become to-day, to-day shall pass into the long vista of yesterdays, and yesterdays would vanish but for the saving grace within the portals of to-day. Time shall pass away. Eternity shall reign. The Rhine-daughters shall again possess their gold!

The Norse mythology is all that remains of a religion which probably prevailed among many of the northern nations. There is a similar groundwork found in the legends of them all, with just enough difference to indicate different national characteristics. It is quite probable that Wagner was as familiar with these legends as we are with our own nursery rhymes, and that he spontaneously selected whatever was best adapted to his purpose, and that his purpose was not only to amuse but also to instruct. For the story of this drama he has taken individuals who stand for or express their class or kind, and this fact makes them types rather than individuals.

The entire setting of Wagner's Trilogy presents a far-away primeval time, when man was innocent, and existence joyous and its own reward. One critic of Wagner has made this

suggestive comment upon one aspect of the great musician's work: as water once held all things in solution, so, he says, the flowing waters of the Rhine, clean, pure, innocent, may be regarded as symbolizing, in *The Ring of the Nibelung*, thought which holds in its embrace all that is of truth or value to the race.

The gold, the highest symbol of value, expresses truth or some phase of truth to be kept inviolate. In its position on the rock, its only use seemed to be its glorious beauty. The Rhine-daughters fully recognized the importance of their guardianship and the penalty of disobedience, and while they knew of its intrinsic power under different conditions, its chief use to them was doubtless to guide them into a higher phase of life through duty apprehended, duty fulfilled. They indicate that state of development akin to early childhood, whose greatest wisdom lies in its willing and perfect obedience.

Such being the ideas that underlie the image of the treasure, what, it may be asked, are we to understand by the character of the dwarf who was so eager to possess it? The mythologies tell us that the dwarfs were not moral beings and for that reason not punishable. They are pictured as active, industrious, little creatures, and are represented as earnestly desiring salvation, which could only be achieved through association with human beings. Of this salvation,

so say the mythologies, there was only a slender hope.

In seeking the Rhine-daughters, Alberic was conscious of only a dim and feeble sense of love, the highest conception of that passion possible to him and to his kind. These pretty creatures were quite different from himself and his companions, and in the recognition of that fact, combined with his willing admiration, was there not enough, if adhered to, to raise him somewhat in the scale of being? However that may be, for Alberic the golden dream of power destroyed for ever his slender hope of higher living.

There is an unwritten but invariable law of life that, whatever is snatched from its native environment and made an object and end apart from all that should harmonize with it, becomes an instrument of retribution to its possessor. Thus does the gold become fatal to Alberic. The underlying meaning of the opening of Wagner's story has points in common with that of the Scriptural account of what transpired in the garden of Eden. In that account the universe and man are represented as being pure and perfect until the apple, stolen and eaten for knowledge's sake, becomes the cause of the curse from which humanity has not yet recovered.

To return to *The Ring*, the dwarfs, delving in

the darkness of the earth, may represent the animal instincts which are very far beneath the moral qualities. Before the world's harmony was broken, these instincts were not capable of much or any harm. With harmony destroyed, they became baneful and sinister because ungoverned by moral force. They became "envy, hatred, and malice, and all uncharitableness," and the like. They may be classified as the undermining qualities which are always destructive and never constructive, as are the moral qualities.

The Rhine-daughters are higher in the scale than Alberic and his kin, and represent the lighter, gayer, and more buoyant qualities of character. They seemed to be, within their limitation, exemplary, until they became unfaithful guardians of the treasure. And, but for this unfaithfulness, Alberic might have carried back with him into the gloomy earth a transforming ray, by the light of which he and his companions might have travelled the upward path. The symbolical meaning of the theft of the gold would seem to be that the lower human instincts had, temporarily at least, gained a victory over the higher.

CHAPTER II

The Price of Valhalla

(Scene II)

THE Norse mythology differs from the Greek and Roman mythologies in this particular among others: the Greek and Roman gods are represented as superior beings, all-powerful deities, while the Norse gods are more frail and faulty, and seem to be working upward toward a higher ideal, though, notwithstanding their limitations, they leave upon our minds a sense of their colossal power.

Following our story once more we are led to a region of crags and peaks. As the morning's glow falls upon the Rhine, it reveals Wotan and Fricka upon the mossy river bank asleep. Wotan is the great god of all this realm, and Fricka is his wedded wife. A glorious castle, brave with towers and battlements, glitters in the morning's sunlight, on the opposite bank of the Rhine.

Fricka is the first to awaken from her sleep, and she calls her lord. Together they view the castle with ever-increasing joy and delight. It had been constructed over-night by two giants who had hitherto been the rulers of the underworld.

In the realm of the gods there had ever been two great fears. One of these fears was that the power of the gods ultimately would be overthrown; and the other, closely connected with it, was that the little dwarfs would multiply very greatly in the underworld and be the fatal instruments of this destruction.

The giants had bargained to build Valhalla on condition of receiving in payment for the work the beauteous goddess Freia. Freia was the goddess of youth and beauty. She it was who grew the golden apples, which, aside from mead, constituted the food of the gods, and which sustained them ever in perennial youth. She typified the pure ideal and her apples signified lofty and heavenly aspirations. Valhalla was the stronghold which was built to protect Wotan and the other gods from the possible incursions of the dwarfs.

In the midst of the rejoicings of Wotan and Fricka, they were recalled to the true state of things by the thought of the price to be paid—Fricka's glorious sister Freia! Fricka upbraids Wotan for having made the bargain. He re-

members well the price, but bids her not to be troubled, and reminds her that she had been very willing that the castle should be built. She excuses herself for this desire upon the ground that she had hoped that it would operate as an inducement to Wotan to remain at home, while his motive had been to increase his power and might.

Wotan concedes that this is true, but he makes the matter plain to Fricka that he desires to wander at will, loving where he may. He, however, wishes her to remember that when he sought her favor he risked both his eyes and actually left one in pawn. Such, he reminded Fricka, was the price he had paid for her. This episode to which Wotan alludes is taken from the mythological story in accordance with which the god, Odin, is represented as drinking at a fountain of earthly advantage or knowledge, which caused the loss of one eye. And the hidden meaning of the story is that he really lost one half of his perception, and that half the higher or spiritual, while retaining moral perception.

Wotan, after hearing Fricka's words, rallies to the defence of Freia, and asserts that she shall not be taken. Freia, herself, shortly appears and begs for protection, for the giants have approached and demanded their pay. In this extremity Wotan alone is calm, and he

announces that Loki has promised to extricate him from the dilemma. It seems from Loki's absence that he does not intend to fulfil his promise. The giants come into the presence of the gods, and, pointing with unconcealed pride to the completed castle, ask for their promised reward.

Wotan temporizes by asking them to name their price. They remind him that the price previously fixed upon was "Freia, the holy," "Holda, the free one." The answer of Wotan is an absolute refusal to part with Freia, and the giants are filled with surprise and indignation. They had not expected treachery from beings so far above them, and for their honest service they demand their rightful pay. They reproach Wotan with the fact that this treaty was written upon his spear, which symbolized his might and his inviolate word. Fasolt, one of the giants, reminds him, too, that what he is, he is only by the strength of treaties, and bids him to beware. It is the belief of this honest giant that power declines when honor fails.

Wotan tries to excuse his speech as a jest. Fasolt holds him up to derision for placing no higher value upon "a glorious woman" than upon a fortress of stone. And for this same "glorious woman," the giants remind Wotan, they have faithfully striven.

Fafnir, the other giant, interposes. He says

that Freia, herself, would be of little value to them, but that their design had been to take her away from the Æsir (gods), who, without her golden apples, would wither and die.

Fasolt and Fafnir embody respectively two evil qualities—desire and greed—but they are represented as honest, and willing to give honest service, expecting, however, a just reward. Fasolt is the better of the two, and desires Freia for herself.

In this episode the giants are undergoing the temptation under the stress of which we have seen Alberic fall. Fasolt's motives are higher than Fafnir's, and it is clear that, possessed of Freia, he would develop higher characteristics. Fafnir's motives, in opposing the gods, set him upon a lower plane.

Wotan meanwhile is becoming very apprehensive. Loki, the god of fire, is a personification of strategy, and is called the diplomat of the lower world. Wotan now wonders if Loki has betrayed him, and if Freia must be sacrificed.

The giants demand nothing more than Freia, and pressing toward her they signify that they will take nothing less. Donner and Froh, brothers of Freia, come to her defence, and bid defiance to the demands of the giants. Wotan interposes his spear, and before its might all yield for the moment. In the distance, Loki

at length appears, and Wotan appeals to him, upon his approach, to extricate them from their sorry bargain.

Loki gazes upon Valhalla with the air of a proprietor, noting its strength and beauty, and placing his full approval upon the work. Having tested every part, he has found that every requirement has been met. The giants have failed in nothing, and he himself has not been idle in the work. Wotan perceives that Loki ignores the perplexing situation, and calls his attention to the fact, that of all the gods, himself alone, Wotan, has been his friend, and that, when Freia was demanded as the price of the castle, consent had been given only upon condition that it should finally be withdrawn.

Loki artfully says that this is not so—that he only promised to *consider how* the conditions of the bargain might be cancelled and Freia saved. The gods are stricken with horror! Have they been betrayed?

Loki proceeds to say that he has wandered the wide world over, and everywhere has sought a substitute that might be offered in the place of Freia. Everywhere he has sought to find her equal in worth, and everywhere men have smiled derisively at him. He has found that nothing in the world is as priceless as woman. One being he has found, however, who has preferred other things to woman. Alberic, the

Nibelung, failing to gain the favor of the Rhine-daughters, revengefully robbed the Rhine of its gold, and now places its value far above the value of woman. This the Rhine-daughters, themselves, have told him, and among the dark recesses of the river they are still mourning their treasure. They appeal to Wotan for its return, and Loki asserts that he has promised to lay the matter before him.

The giants are at this point greatly interested, for it has been in their absence that Alberic has slipped out of the underworld and done this mischief. They ask Loki what may be the use or worth of this gold. Loki replies that to the Rhine-maidens it was only a toy, but that, formed into a ring, it would become of mighty power and would give to its owner the whole world. At these words, wondrous visions float through the minds of the gods and the giants.

Wotan sees power and greatness without limit. Fricka beholds in it a charm by which to hold the affections of Wotan. The giants behold the gold and its power in the place of Freia. Fricka appeals to Wotan to spare no pains in obtaining this treasure. Wotan, himself, is eager to possess it. In fact, he consults Loki as to how it may best be obtained.

Loki says that a magic rune changes the gold into a ring, but that only he may know its power who will fully and forever relinquish love.

Alberic, he continues, has already complied with the conditions, and has made the ring. The thought of relinquishing love depresses Wotan. And love, as it is here conceived, means the perceiving, choosing, and following of that which is higher. Wotan cannot relinquish love, and this reveals him of finer mould than the beings beneath him, for love is the final test of all worth.

All see that the ring in the hands of Alberic means ruin to the gods, and all agree that it must be taken from him. Loki advises that the deed be done, but stipulates the return of the ring to the water-maidens, while Wotan and Fricka assent to the former proposition but reject the latter. The giants are also absorbed in the new scheme and to all appearance Freia has passed entirely out of the case. They counsel together, and Fafnir announces that they will accept the Nibelung's treasure in placé of Freia. In the meantime they will carry away the goddess, and keep her until night falls. Up to that time they will hold her as hostage, but if, at evening, the treasure and gold be not produced, Freia will be lost to the gods forever. The giants finally bear Freia away amidst the reproaches of the gods.

But what change has befallen the Æsir? Loki rallies them that the bloom of youth is passing, that a dim grayness overspreads them,

that age has descended upon them, for no golden apples have they had this day. Loki exults in his own superiority to the situation, for never has Freia given him of her golden fruit. There is consternation among the gods. In each other's faces they behold the dimness and pallor of advancing age. They must be preserved, and Freia must be saved! An instantaneous decision is reached. The gods will seek Alberic, and, if necessary, wrest his treasure from him. Wotan calls quickly to Loki, and together they disappear through the rocky fissures on their unholy quest.

In the *Eddas* there is a certain recognition of a superior power, who may be the supreme God worshipped by the Christian world. It is to such a power that reference is made in such phrases as "whom we dare not name," or "whose name we dare not speak,"—phrases that certainly do not refer to Wotan.

It is fully conceded that Wotan signifies the will,[1] but without doubt he represents that

[1] As is well known, Wagner was a student of the philosophy of Schopenhauer, and the character of Wotan is identified with the idea of will, and his progress in the story with the assertion and the denial of the "will to live."

As to the significance of the "will to live," the reader is referred to *Will and Idea*. By Arthur Schopenhauer. Translated by R. B. Haldane, M.A., and John Kemp, M.A., London.

manifestation of will which is other than divine, a manifestation of will that belongs to this world and has not the infinite sweep of an eternal orbit, but rather turns upon itself, and revolves in the smaller and ever-contracting orbit that we call self. Yet of its own desire, this lesser will may escape from these limitations, be guided back again, and move in union with the eternal will once more. These thoughts find illustration in the story of the theft of the Rhine-Gold, the resultant complications, and the ultimate return of the Ring to the daughters of the Rhine.

There are some things found in the legends and also in the Wagnerian text to indicate that Freia had once been the wife of Wotan, but she is described as "the free one," "the holy one," and was the unpossessed. She may then be regarded as the ideal followed by the will ere it appeared isolated and apart from the divine will. Fricka typifies conventionality, conservatism, the power of precedent and arbitrary law. These are accepted meanings. She also represents the spirit of the past, even as her sister, Freia, stands for the spirit of the future.

Freia was the pure and lofty ideal forever pursued, forever advancing.

By its nature the limited will should have been free to follow the leading of divine will into the realm of ideality. Fricka represents

the will's compromise, while Freia is its manifest destiny.

Loki is a being of the underworld, the god of fire,—the old Norsemen sought to find God in the forces of nature,—but in his vocation of ministering to the needs of Wotan (the deflected or vitiated will) he becomes the most dangerous type of subtlety—depravity that results from the exercise of the intellect ungoverned by moral restraints.

The giants have justly obtained the right to possess Freia through honest labor, yet we see them willingly yield their claim to her as their wages, giving full proof of their unfitness for salvation. Salvation in the Christian sense is not here meant, but only the opportunity and power to become a moral being. To the moral being, salvation means the attaining to the nature and powers of the spiritual being. That is salvation in its highest and truest sense.

Valhalla is the fixed environment of the will, which in its nature is free and capable of infinite change and progress. In following the divine will it should be unconfined and free. The building of Valhalla, therefore, was a crime against the nature of the will itself, and was instigated by self-will for the preservation of self.

In matters of progress and advancement of whatever nature, there is "no continuing city."

There is no point in art, science, or religion, or in development of character, where there may be rest, save for a night, except at the peril of the incomparable Freia, the eternal and immortal ideal.

CHAPTER III

THE RANSOM OF FREIA

(SCENES III AND IV)

IN the darkness of the lower regions, Alberic had forged the Ring from the gold, and its possession had given him magic knowledge and magic power. He had subdued to his purposes all the beings of the underworld, and they had brought of all its gems and vast treasures and had laid them at his feet. The Ring had also given him full knowledge of its power.

In the Norse mythology it is related that Odin possessed a wonderful ring called Draupnir, which every ninth day dropped a ring like itself, and was an emblem of fertility. It may also be considered a symbol of the multiplicative power inherent in thought. The mission of the gold while in its native watery element was general and universal. Its genial glow brightened into warmth whatever came within its radiance.

The meaning of gold is that which is true, or truth, and truth torn from its harmonious environment and bent to selfish ends becomes to him who has so perverted it simply knowledge which is limited in power to the being who uses it. While in a measure it is still multiplicative, its universal power is lost. The power of the Ring indicates the perversion of that which is true.

We must now follow Wotan and Loki, who, in their downward quest, speedily reach the vast cavern where lie the treasures and gems of Alberic. They find Alberic disciplining his brother Mimi, who has but now completed, according to some very minute and explicit directions, a bit of work which he seems unwilling to produce. Alberic has given him the formula from mysterious runic knowledge learned through the Ring. The work is now finished, and after much reluctance Mimi gives it up. Alberic pronounces the workmanship perfect, but cannot be assured of its effectiveness without a trial.

The piece is a network of metal for the head, a tarn-helmet, or, as it is called elsewhere, a wishing-cap. If constructed aright, according to the mystic rune, and placed upon one's head, any wish formulated in thought or word would instantly be realized.

Carlyle calls the god Wünsch, or Wish, the

"notablest" of the gods, and thinks that he represents the sincerest yet rudest voice of the spirit of man, and he adds that man had later to be taught that the god Wish was not the true God. It is significant, however, as indicating that mankind was beginning to realize that, through his own inward desires, his condition might be changed and elevated. Was the desultory wish rudimentary prayer?

To return again to our story, we see Alberic testing the helmet. Placing it upon his head, he wishes to become invisible and at once disappears from view. Mimi cries out in astonishment. Where has Alberic gone? He can no longer see him. A voice says that if Alberic cannot be seen he can be felt, and Mimi at once writhes and squirms at the audible sounds of an invisible scourge. Now the voice congratulates Mimi upon the success of the work, now it boasts that evermore shall Alberic hold invisible sway over his minions, and now it threatens that never again shall they be safe from his eyes. This is the moment at which Loki and Wotan appear in the cavern. Mimi groans and appeals to them for help. He begs for surcease of these blows and Loki promises to help him.

But what help is there for Mimi when he is in bondage to a hard-hearted brother? Loki inquires by what right his brother is such a tyrant.

Mimi then recounts the sad story of the subjugation of himself and his kin,—how Alberic had shaped from the Rhine-gold the shining Ring and by its magical runes had bent their spirits to his sway; how all their anvils were now working day and night in his service; and how, through this magic, he detected treasure within the earth and required the dwarfs to delve for it, turn it into metal, and cast it into bars.

Loki assumes for the sake of conversation that it is because of his laziness that Mimi has felt the lash.

Mimi, in self-defence, unfolds the story of how he was commissioned to forge a helmet, after many mysterious directions, and that he had suspected its wonderful powers. He confesses that he had secretly longed to keep it for himself, that he might become the master and Alberic, in his turn, the slave. He recounts that, while he had fashioned the helmet perfectly, he had not quite read its magic aright. Only in the last few moments had he learned through Alberic the exact nature of the cap, and then his brother had placed it upon his head, wished to be invisible, disappeared from sight, and scourged him with invisible lashes.

Wotan and Loki soon perceive that the task before them is not an easy one. Mimi now asks his guests who they may be, and they tell

him that they are friends who would gladly set him free.

Alberic is now heard approaching and they seat themselves to await events. The invisible dwarf has resumed his own visible shape, and, carrying the tarn-helmet at his belt, he appears driving before him a small army of Nibelungs, laden with gems and gold, which they pile into a great heap. With cries and brandishings of his whip, he advances boldly until the sight of the strangers makes him start back affrighted. Suspecting that Mimi has been holding conversation with them and that perhaps he has imparted information to them, he therefore sends his brother back with the other dwarfs into the earth to dig and to delve and return with more treasure. Any remissness upon Mimi's part will, the latter is warned, be met with the lash. If any of the dwarfs are idle, Mimi shall answer for it. Mimi gone, Alberic takes off the Ring, admires it, and kisses it, while the rest of the shrieking dwarfs vanish in the distance. Then, turning to Wotan and Loki, he demands their errand there.

Wotan professes to have heard of Alberic's wondrous works, and, doubting, comes to be convinced. Alberic is, however, not deceived, feeling sure that this means that Wotan is envious. Loki in his own character of fire and flame reproaches Alberic for his unfriendliness,

and reminds him that it has ever been Loki's fire that has heated his forge. Alberic declares that he is in no fear of Loki, and taunts him with now belonging to the "light elves" and with being just as true to them as he formerly was to the dark ones. Loki flatters him by noting the evidences of his wealth and apparent power. Alberic considers it all as nothing, for to-morrow will bring him as much more.

Wotan suggests that all the treasure of which he is master is of no use in the underworld. Alberic rejoins that he needs it all to become master of the world. These words alarm Wotan, who wonders how the dwarf can become so powerful.

Alberic further boasts that he will fetter them all, and that all shall pine and languish for his gold. He declares that he will first fetter the men and that then he will claim the women. He defiantly bids them beware of the time when the Nibelung host shall rise from darkness into day. Fear again seizes Wotan, but Loki bids him subdue his fears, and he keeps in mind the main object of their visit, leading up to the subject of which he would speak in a roundabout way. He expresses a desire to see some of Alberic's work, and promises, if it be what it is described, that he will gladly hail him as the mightiest. He warns Alberic, however, that he must not allow the Nibelungs to nurse any

hatred toward their master or they will steal away his treasures.

Alberic, in his reply, declares himself not to be as dull as Loki thinks him, and then dilates upon the mysteries of the tarn-helmet, made by his most skilful smith, Mimi, boastfully claiming that with it on his head he is everywhere invisible and everywhere safe from disturbance, even that of Loki himself. Loki asserts that he has heard of such marvels, but is slow to believe them. While he would gladly believe, he yet doubts. Alberic promptly offers to make his statement good. If they will name the shape, he will assume it. Loki is mute with apparent wonder, so Alberic assumes the helmet and audibly desires to become a dragon. Without the delay of an instant Alberic has vanished and a monstrous serpent is coiling and writhing upon the cavern floor. Loki appears to be terrified and Alberic becomes again visible.

After this demonstration, Loki praises Alberic's power, but, as he has seen him "wax great," he now requests him to change himself to something small,—a feat which will show even greater power than to become a dragon. He says he would like, for instance, to see him as a toad. So once more Alberic dons the helmet and calls as if he were calling for a toad to come from a cranny. In a moment the dwarf disappears and a small toad is seen hopping

about on the rocks. At this moment, under Loki's direction, Wotan puts his foot on the toad. Loki himself then grasps the tarn-helmet, and Alberic, now deprived of it, is seen squirming under Wotan's foot, and is shortly bound with cords and taken to the upper world.

The upper world is dim and gray, for Freia, held as hostage by the giants, cannot dispense her beneficent influence. Forth from the darkness into this grayness come Wotan and Loki, bearing Alberic, the Nibelung, in fetters.

The triumphant Loki shows him the broad world he so wishes to gain. Alberic struggles without avail. Wotan tells him that while he, Alberic, has been dreaming of the living world, their fetters have bound him, and only by paying a ransom can he gain his freedom.

Alberic bemoans his short-sightedness and vows revenge. He has yielded to the craving for wealth and power, and has changed from an inoffensive gnome to a pitiful creature, without any of the higher hopes and desires. He has passed from anger to hatred, from hatred to malice, from malice to revenge. A being animated by revenge turns a demon, and such Alberic has become. In this note, the difference between himself and the Rhiné-daughters. They sorrow, they moan, they lament, but seek not to avenge their wrongs. This proves them of higher nature than Alberic.

Alberic once more vows revenge! Loki assures him that revenge is for men who are free, and advises that he give them their tax without delay. The dwarf demands the price. Wotan assures him that their price is his sparkling hoard. Alberic considers. If they only desire the hoard, with the Ring still in his possession he can easily obtain as much more. He tells them that he will give them the hoard, but that first his hands must be untied. The Ring is on his right hand and Loki releases that hand. Raising the Ring to his lips, Alberic utters a command which summons the Nibelungs, and then claims the right to be unfettered. This Wotan and Loki refuse until the treasure is their own.

The little Nibelungs, laden with gold and gems, soon appear in throngs, and pile the treasure into a heap before Wotan and Loki. Alberic now considers himself a free man and prepares to depart, claiming first the helmet at Loki's belt, which Loki now places upon the pile as part of the spoil.

Alberic rages, though he knows that with the Ring in his possession he can compel Mimi to forge for him another cap. Once more he begs for release, and Loki appeals to Wotan to know if he is satisfied. No, Wotan is not satisfied. He sees the Ring upon Alberic's finger, and he desires that also. Alberic is truly dismayed.

Must that, too, be taken from him? He offers his life rather than the Ring. They demand the Ring and are willing to leave him his life. But he asserts that the Ring is his own as well as his life.

Wotan here tells him that the Ring is not his own, but that the gold from which it was made was stolen from the daughters of the Rhine.

Would not Wotan gladly have taken the gold, had he been willing to forge the Ring? Alberic asks. He sees that Wotan is gloating over the fact that, in a maddened moment, an ignorant dwarf has committed the deed. He predicts that while his own sin will fall only upon his own head, Wotan's sin, if sin he commits, "will fall on all things that were, that are, and will be."

And by this speech it is intended to symbolize the truth that, when the will voluntarily consents to sin, the consequences of the sin must run through all time till expiated in all fulness.

Wotan is unwilling to let Alberic keep the Ring, and violently tears it from his finger. Alberic's bonds are then loosened. But he does not depart; instead, he laughs with wild and demoniac rage, and curses the Ring, calling down the penalty of death upon whomever shall possess it. Its lustre shall "gladden no life." "Care shall consume each possessor." Envy

shall gnaw them who possess it not. All shall desire its delights, though none shall enjoy them nor profit by them.

The "murderer's brand," it shall bring, and the fate of each owner shall be languishing and death.

Alberic, after uttering these dreadful curses, disappears among the rocky crevices.

The air grows brighter and clearer. A glow diffuses itself. Freia is returning in the distance with the giants. The brothers, Donner and Froh, advance to herald the welcome news.

Wotan and Loki survey the hoard with pride. Once more the air is soft and balmy as with the zephyrs of returning spring. Without their Freia, sad would be the Æsir! The sunny glow of youth rests joyously once more upon the faces of the gods. Fricka would embrace her, but this the giant Fasolt forbids till the price be paid. The giants have cared for her with honorable trust, and now,—the ransom!

Wotan points to the treasure. Loki has possessed himself of the tarn-helmet as a most desirable aid in pursuing the ends of subtlety, and Wotan wears the Ring. They are both quite willing that the treasure shall pass to the giants.

Fasolt, the gentler and more amiable of the titans, claims that the maiden is seated within his soul, and that the pile must be so fashioned,

in her size and shape, that she may be the better concealed from his eyes, for if he sees her he cannot relinquish her.

They bid her stand, measure off the distance with their staves, and direct that the gods pile the treasure. Loki and Froh skilfully place the treasure between the staves. Fafnir stipulates that they place it compactly and that all the crevices be filled. There seems to be some deficiency, and Fafnir claims that they must have more. Wotan says that there is no more and that this must suffice.

But Fafnir replies that he sees the shining golden hair of Freia through a crevice and asks that the "wove-work" be given them. With reluctance Wotan bids Loki surrender the tarn-helmet.

Fasolt now bemoans that he must lose the glorious maiden. He sees her shining eyes, glowing like stars through the chinks. Her eyes must be hidden or he cannot depart from her. Loki bids them cease their demands for there is no more. Fafnir asserts that there *is* more; that on Wotan's hand there is a ring. It will rest in the crevice and complete the pile. Consternation seizes Wotan! How can he give up the Ring! Loki explains to the giants that the Ring belongs to the Rhine-maidens, and that Wotan, in withholding it, will restore it to them. Wotan denies any intention of restoring

the Ring. He will keep it for his own purposes. Loki argues that its return has been pledged to the river-maidens. Fafnir is firm, and holds that the Ring is part of the ransom.

Matters have now reached a crisis, and Fasolt approaches Freia, claiming that upon these terms the goddess is forever forfeit. The gods implore Wotan to give up the Ring, but Wotan is obdurate.

As they dispute, up into their midst there rises from the earth a majestic woman, Erda. Erda is the earth-goddess, or Wisdom, who is above the control of Wotan, or the will. She lives apart from the gods at the fount of wisdom. With impressive speech she adjures Wotan to "yield the accursed Ring." Wotan challenges the intruder. Who may she be who thus presumes to dictate to the chief of the gods?

Erda answers that she knows all that has been, all that is, and all that shall be,—that she comes to open his eyes. Three daughters, the Nornir, were born to her before the world began, —the past, the present, and the future,—and this trio nightly convey to Wotan their mother's wise prophecies—that a dark day dawns for the Æsir; that all that exists comes to an end; and that it will be best to give up the Ring. Wotan at last is impressed. He would detain her, but commanding him to ponder the wisdom

of her words, she sinks out of sight into the earth.

The gods gather together and plead for Freia. Wotan is absorbed in thought, but he finally reaches a decision. The Ring is placed upon the pile and Freia is free!

Thus do the giants lose sight of love and thus they are lost. Fafnir spreads out a huge sack and prepares to carry away the treasure, refusing to share it with his brother Fasolt. As the latter would have claimed the maid, unshared, so Fafnir, himself, will take the treasure undivided. Fasolt appeals to the gods for justice. Wotan will not arbitrate. Loki advises Fasolt to give up the treasure but to hold the Ring and be thankful.

Fasolt throws himself upon Fafnir and obtains the Ring after a severe struggle. In his chagrin and disappointment, Fafnir strikes one stern blow with his staff and Fasolt is felled to the earth in death. The Ring is wrested from his hand and Fafnir proceeds to gather up the treasure.

The gods are aghast! The echo of Alberic's curse has scarcely died upon their eare, and already the Ring has claimed its first victim, and has brought forth the "murderer's brand."

Loki congratulates Wotan that he has given up the Ring, and declares it "better lost than won."

Wotan shortly announces his determination to repair to Erda and seek her counsel. But Fricka looks longingly at Valhalla, the shining fortress that only that same morning had been their gladness and delight.

Donner rises to a rock and calls for all the mists and all the dews, and as they rally swiftly to his call, his hammer dashes against the rugged rocks, and showers of rain purify the air amidst roars of thunder and flashes of lightning. Froh, joy and gladness, has disappeared in the clouds, and is at his post in the upper air. As the clouds roll away, a rainbow-bridge is seen to span the heavens. This is the bridge of hope that carries the gods to Valhalla.

Fafnir now gathers together his treasure and departs. Wotan muses before the rainbow-bridge. He recalls how in the early morning Valhalla stood matchless in the sunlight; how all day long he has worked his way through mighty ills, yet made no progress toward it. The night has now come and it holds forth to him a shelter. To its enfolding arms he will turn. As the gods pass toward the rainbow-bridge, imploring voices float upward from the Rhine and cast their burden on the air. The Rhine-daughters are pleading for their gold.

Loki has a fancy that henceforth he will ever wander in fire and flame, and waste and destroy these beings who have bound him, and as he

pauses, considering this, Wotan commands him to quell the voices of the water-maidens. Loki, therefore, bids them to forget their gold and to bask henceforth in the glory of the gods. Again and again, however, they lift their voices in mournful strain.

At the foot of the bridge, Wotan, pausing in his course, decides upon a new plan of action. He sees that matters have come to a most evil pass, for which there is no present remedy. A sudden inspiration has come to him: he will create a new race, that shall be free from the greed for gold and its power and from the hampering laws that govern the gods. One of this race there shall be who, from his own needs, of his own free desire, will repair the present evils and existent wrongs. This hero will avert the ruin of the gods. After this the gods pass over the rainbow-bridge into Valhalla.

Glancing backward at the characters that appear in *The Rhine-Gold*, let us consider, in a general way, their symbolical meaning.

The will of this world, personated by Wotan, has in its deviation from the course of divine will lost the regulating and restraining influences of divine law. The deviation, itself, has been in the nature of a shock or loss of balance in which the will and all of its faculties have suffered correspondingly. The faculties no

longer act as one, and in unison, but severally, and independently, and, more often than not, erratically. In the world's history they come upon the scene of action panoramically, no one of them up to its highest standard—its half-remembrance of what is true and perfect. And yet each blindly strives toward the restoration of the perfect balance.

It makes little difference whether we study the history of the human race as a whole or whether we study it in individuals of the race since in each individual is epitomized, with slight variations, the history of the whole. The character of each age may be known from the study of the individuals who belong to it, and from the figures of *The Ring* we may conclude that the age to which it belongs was a period long anterior to the appearance on earth of man as a true moral being. And how shall we define man as we have found him in this lyrical drama?

Emerson says: "Every substance is negatively electric to that which stands above it in the chemical tables, positive to that which stands below it." If Wotan, or the will, be compared to something similar to himself, and yet higher, with what may it be compared save with divine will? Compared with divine will, the human will, or Wotan, becomes a negation.

The period then, certainly, is prior to the

advent of man as a moral being, and the characters are negations according to divine standards. Wotan, poised upon the rainbow-bridge of promised hope, over which he has assumed to lead the gods to Valhalla, has grasped the idea, that the resources and capabilities of that age are insufficient to cope with its difficulties and its problems. And this is the mental attitude which tends toward progress.

Erda and Freia who typify wisdom and the pure ideal, are above the will, and therefore not subject to it, and are unfallen or still in obedience to divine law.

If the other characters in *The Rhine-Gold* be examined, it will be evident that each one is represented as having a certain plainly-defined sense of his special duty. They represent beings who perceive, who plan, devise, and calculate with excellent precision until they come to a clear recognition of duty—a sense of the moral obligations to do right.

In recognizing that the Rhine-daughters are more excellent than himself, Alberic has a dim sense of that which is above and beyond his condition and which, for him, is a kind of moral elevation. The Rhine-daughters, in turn, know well the duty of guarding the Rhine-gold, and the penalty of unfaithfulness. The gods know well the value of Freia, with her golden apples yet each is willing to imperil her and their own

well-being for the temporary stronghold of Valhalla.

These beings then were perceptive beings only. They possessed moral perception without moral power. Perceiving only, they did not accomplish anything morally excellent.

For this new race, therefore, Wotan desired characteristics not found among the gods. He would seek moral power—a quest of he knew not what.

Between *The Rhine-Gold* and *The Valkyrie*, there is a logical sequence, but a chronological chasm. What length of time bridges this chasm none may say. Perchance æons.

The Rhine-Gold closes with Wotan's inspiration to create a new race, which shall be free from the domination and enslavement of the artificial laws that govern the gods.

It was made plain in *The Rhine-Gold* that the gods of the Norse mythology represented beings morally less than man. It was also pointed out that the will, or Wotan, had given consent to these artificial laws for the temporary power that they would give him, which mental compromise was his marriage with Fricka. Wotan is beginning to see the insecurity of these laws in comparison with the divine law which is really seated in his own nature, and which asserts itself when he relies upon the

human laws which are written in runes upon his spear-haft. He foresees that man must be governed from within rather than by decrees from outside. He wishes this new race to be free from these laws, and also to be free from the greed for gold and power that characterizes the beings of the underworld. Out of this race shall come a hero who will repair all the evil that Wotan beholds, and turn aside the ruin of the gods. This hero will be governed from within. He will be self-governed.

The Valkyrie cannot be fully understood at first reading, without the relation beforehand of matters recorded within its pages. It tells that Wotan repaired to Erda for further instruction regarding the safety of the gods, and that, as pledges to him, she bore him nine daughters, chief of whom was Brynhildr. Erda, it will be remembered, was the wise and wonderful goddess who arose out of the earth at Wotan's feet, and solemnly adjured him to relinquish the Ring, and whom he afterwards reluctantly obeyed. This goddess is thought to symbolize primal wisdom. And the kind of wisdom she represents is not very different, if at all so, from the wisdom in the Scriptures.

Just before the fateful moment of turning toward the rainbow-bridge that awaited the progress of the gods to Valhalla, Wotan had announced his intention to seek Erda for further

knowledge. Fricka dissuaded him for the time, and he went with her to the great castle, but his first intention may be considered as the crucial moment when the will turned to wisdom.

How shall we characterize the product of the will and wisdom? The Norse mythology was a religion, as has been before noted, and it may be therefore compared, in part, with our own. Turning to the *Proverbs* of Solomon, in which most truly the will of mankind has embraced wisdom, we find them to lay greatest stress upon such qualities as prudence, discretion temperance, righteousness, justice, rectitude, and courage. The opposite qualities, existent prior to the union of the will and wisdom, are held as accursed. They, the false conditions of thought—corresponding to the ideas the gods of Norse mythology stand for—are threatened with extinction. The strong and helpful qualities generated by the will and wisdom are the heroic virtues. They constitute the masculine in thought; appeared first upon the world's arena; and are typified by the Valkyries. While the Valkyries were the choosers of the valorous slain, they were also obedient to the call of any in distress who asked their help.

It may then be said that the Valkyries typify the heroic and strenuous virtues which are the direct offspring of the will and wisdom. Brynhildr, as leader of the Valkyries, epitomizes

them all as valor, and is Wotan's will transformed, or, as some one has said, his "primal will re-born."

The story goes on to relate that Wotan seeks a mortal or human woman, and that she bears him two children, twins, a boy and a girl. These are Siegmund and Sieglinda. The meanings attached to these names are very interesting in connection with this study. "Sieg" means "victory," and "mund" means "mouth" or "opening." Thus Siegmund may be understood as the opening toward, or the beginning of, victory. "Linde" means "comforting," "gentleness," "mildness." Sieglinde may therefore be understood as the comfort of victory, or its completion.

It must not be forgotten that a new and higher race is in process of formation. The heroic virtues are already attained through wisdom. There is but one thing higher than wisdom, and that is love. Does the human woman typify love? The matter may be tested. Love, be it human or divine, has ever one characteristic—it gives. Its nature is to give and to give of its own substance, and to it receiving is secondary. The love that bargains and makes conditions, that demands and receives only, is of one type; but the love that gives all and ever, and that knows no sense of limitation, is of quite another. Which is the nobler and the higher let

each reader decide for himself. It is the nobler of these two kinds of love that is peculiarly characteristic of woman.

In her love for man woman gives all, and having thus given all, there is a further evolution in her nature in which to her offspring she gives ever and always. Woman in her love for her child is earth's highest expression of the divine and universal love that ever blesses its children.

The meaning therefore naturally develops that the will, which long ago had a perception of love, has attained to its comprehension, and that the world has advanced to that point at which the affections are well defined.

The first step in this development was the transformation of the will through its union with wisdom, bringing the heroic virtues into expression. The second step was the union of such measure of Wotan's transformed will as was in activity in the world with the typical woman, and this union brought the gentler virtues into expression, through which love was comprehended and the affections developed. Brynhildr, it should be here borne in mind, represented Wotan's transformed will, in its ideal essence.

The heroic virtues appear as the masculine in human thought. The gentler virtues appear as the feminine. Later it will become clear that the

heroic virtues hold within them the gentler ones, and that, when the gentler ones appear, the heroic ones are also present; and further that the two kinds of virtues are not really two but one. The age which reveals the heroic virtues and the gentler virtues as standing each alone, and yet upon the same plane of equality, is a far more advanced age than that in which only the heroic ones are seen, because it is a nearer approximation to the restoration of the perfect balance, the ideal condition.

These are the ideas represented by Siegmund and Sieglinda. When the affections are fully developed, moral power is attained. When moral power has been attained, the affections are found active and unerring.

Properly speaking, there are no qualities distinctively and exclusively either masculine or feminine. The human consciousness seems to be an unstable equilibrium. If certain strong and heroic qualities predominate, the manifestation is called masculine, or if the gentle ones predominate it is called feminine. In each category, both sets of virtues exist, but in varying combinations. It seems as if the nobler qualities had been thrown out of balance in our life, and as if its great struggle were to recover the lost equilibrium.

The poets of the world, who have ever been its seers, have always perceived this lack of

balance of the two classes of human qualities. But the highest types of our race have been men and women who were at once gentle and tender, brave and courageous.

Earnest and true living, in its highest sense, has ever tended in the same character to make the transition easy and natural from one of these phases to the other: from the heroic virtues to the gentle ones, from the gentle ones to the heroic; from strength and bravery to love, from love and tenderness to courage and valor.

THE TRILOGY

THE VALKYRIE

THE TRILOGY

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THE VALKYRIE

CHAPTER I

THE HORN OF MEAD

(ACT I)

THE story of Siegmund and Sieglinda is an adaptation from the *Eddas*. Whether it was fact or fiction can never be determined. Its use in the dramas is artistic. It is placed there with the purpose of idealizing the formation of higher beings embodying those qualities through which the perfect race is developed, and upon which its perfection depends. Its interpretation, in a general way, is, that, while an all-powerful deity may create a race by a single mandate, in an imperfect world from disorganized materials, the process of creation is a slow one; that such a race first exists, or is created, in uncombined elements; that such elements must be organized according to their natures; and that these elements, being akin, are in sympathy and affinity with each other.

As they progress, these elements gather themselves into groups, and ultimately the groups themselves unite, and give its character to a new epoch, higher than any which has preceded.

As Siegmund the heroic virtues have become active in the world; as Sieglinda, the gentle ones. Thus the story becomes a vehicle for conveying easily to the mind the kinship, sympathy, and affinity between the heroic and the gentle virtues, and their subsequent and inevitable union in character, manifesting itself in the world.

The contrast between the idyl-like conditions of *The Rhine-Gold* and the stormy character of *The Valkyrie*, which opens with wind and tempest, is very great. At first approach there is no apparent connection between the two. But there is a real connection as we learn in due time from the conversations between Wotan and Fricka, and Wotan and Brynhildr.

The situations in *The Rhine-Gold* are simple, and the difficulties, encountered by each character are in large measure due to the defects in his own nature. Our sympathies, consequently, are not aroused by them to any great degee.

In *The Valkyrie*, however, we find Wotan or the will, trying earnestly to undo the consequences of his own falsity, and all the principal

characters of the story striving after dimly understood ideals for their own weal, while heroically suffering for the sins of others. Innocent of the curse upon them, they are yet comprehended in it, and are under its unrelenting shadow.

The story opens in the cottage of Hunding a forest warrior and hunter. This cottage is built around the trunk of a mighty ash-tree, whose vast and spreading branches cannot be seen for the roof built among them. It is a humble home, but a bright fire with a cheerful glow burns upon the hearth. The wind rages and the tempest prevails outside. As we look at it, the door opens from without, and a tired and wayworn youth pauses at the entrance. Going in, he flings himself down before the fire for very weariness. This youth is Siegmund.

Sieglinda, a beautiful young woman, the wife of Hunding, appears, and views with surprise this stranger upon the hearth. Who may he be, wearied and worn, and yet so dauntless? He asks for a draught to quench his thirst, and Sieglinda brings fresh water to him, which seems to lessen his load of care as he drinks it. He asks who she is. She replies that she is the wife of Hunding, whose cottage now shelters him. If the stranger will wait, Hunding will give him greeting as a guest.

The stranger is wounded and without a

weapon. Sieglinda questions him about his hurt, and as to how his weapon was lost. The youth declares his wound insignificant. His shield and spear, he says, have been shivered by the weapons of pursuing foes. Swifter than his pursuers, he has, however, found a haven, where darkness has gone from him and only sunlight remains.

Sieglinda here fills for him a horn of foaming mead. Mead was to the gods both food and drink, and it typifies the heavenly sustenance and emphasizes the protection of higher law.

She offers him the mead, but not until she has partaken of it will he touch it. Sieglinda then tastes it, after which the youth drinks deeply and returns the horn to her. They gaze long and silently at each other. We may not know their thoughts, but these children of the ascending dynasty have quaffed from everlasting sources the golden liquid of sympathy and affinity, and have been consecrated upon the altars of their race.

The horn of mead was not a love-potion. It was offered as being the natural food of heroes and gods, and was given (and accepted) without the ulterior motives that prompt giving the philter.

What is the emotion that rises in their hearts after quaffing it? Siegmund at once determines to flee that ill-fortune may not visit this

woman. Sieglinda wishes to know who follows him and constrains him to flee. He tells her that ill-fortune has ever dogged him and that he must depart. She then tells him timidly that ill-fortune has also ever made its abode with her, and that it can bring her no more evil! They are both moved by an emotion that they do not understand.

Siegmund returns to the hearth. He will await the return of Hunding. He has been called "Woeful," but he says that he wishes to bring his woe upon no one else. At this moment Hunding enters and asks with an inquiring look who the stranger may be. Sieglinda explains that he is a weary warrior who has fallen exhausted on their hearth. His needs have been supplied. She has given him drink and nourishment. Hunding says that he will not chide his wife and that the young hero may remain. Handing her his weapons, which she hangs upon the tree, he bids her prepare their evening meal. And as he gazes at the youth he perceives a great resemblance between him and Sieglinda, but does not betray the fact that he has noticed it. He appears, indeed, unconcerned, though he proceeds to question him.

Surely, the stranger is from far, and yet Hunding observes that he has no horse. The youth assures him that he knows not where he

has wandered. Through forest and fen he has fled from his foes,—he knows not whither.

Sieglinda all this while watches the guest carefully. Hunding notes this also. Gathered around the board, he asks the youth if he has any trouble to impart, and says that both he and his wife would gladly hear his story. Sieglinda adds that she would like to know who the stranger may be.

The youth gazes upon the beauteous Sieglinda, and wishes that he might have been called "Peaceful" or "Joyful" instead of "Woeful." Wolfing, he goes on to tell his hosts, was his father. With a twin sister he had entered the world, and soon had lost both mother and sister—the sister he had scarcely known. His father, Wolfing, was strong and warlike, and his foes were many. Returning one day from a hunt in the forest, father and son had found their home in ashes, the mother slain, the little sister vanished. Then his father had fled with him, and his youth had been passed with Wolfing in the forests. In spite of many perils and dangers their lives had been preserved. The son grew up to be a man of like mould to his father.

Hunding, at this point, says that he has often heard of this father and son but that until now has never seen either of them. Sieglinda's interest grows in the narration. "Where is the father now?" she asks.

In a "mighty onslaught" where the Wolfings were victorious and chased the foe afar, the youth had strayed from his father. Though he had sought him vainly, he had found nothing but an empty wolf-skin. From that time he had taken shelter only where there were heroes and women, and had abandoned the forests. But from that time he could never gain the fulfilment of his wishes. What he upheld as right, others attacked as wrong. Feuds and strifes had followed him, and rightfully had he been called "Woeful."

Hunding, musing, considers that the Norns, who wove the fate of this stranger, must have loved him as little as he, himself, loves him. Sieglinda thinks it foolish to fear one so defenceless. In what fray, she inquires, were his weapons lost?

Siegmund readily tells the story of his disaster. A gentle maiden, whose kin would have given her, an unwilling bride, to a forest warrior, was rescued by himself. He had slain her brothers with fury, and after his services to her she had bemoaned their fate with bitter tears. The servants of the men slain had surrounded him and clamored for revenge. His shield and spear had defended the maid, until they were shivered and broken. When he was weaponless, the maid expired. The foes whom he had then fought still menaced him.

During this narration Hunding's face has darkened. This is the foe who has earned the hatred of himself and his kinsmen. But now his relatives have asked his aid against the youth who stands before him. It is a foe whom he finds under his very roof. Hunding at once makes Siegmund aware of the state of the case, assuring him at the same time that the rites of hospitality will save him from harm during the night, but that in the morning host and guest must fight and that the stranger will fall. He bids Sieglinda prepare his evening draught, that they may go from the hall. While Sieglinda does the bidding of Hunding, she looks meaningly at the trunk of the great ash-tree, and tries to direct the gaze of the stranger to a certain spot on the bark of the tree. Hunding tells her to hasten. He takes down his weapons, bids the stranger beware, and they pass up the staircase to a room in the roof of the house.

In all the Norse mythology there is no more impressive emblem found than that of Ygdrasil, the mighty ash-tree. It is the tree of existence, in symbol, and signifies all that life means. The Norse people sought God in physical and material manifestations, in "lightning, wind, and tempest," just as earnestly as the present age seeks Him in spiritual states and conditions of mind and "in the still small voice." Carlyle in *The Hero as Divinity* has given a comprehen-

sive account of the meanings embodied by this tree Ygdrasil. In our story Sieglinda is found in the cottage of Hunding, which is built around the trunk of a mighty ash-tree, that corresponds to the tree of which Carlyle speaks. Its place all through the dramas indicates without any question that it is Ygdrasil that is meant, and it may be well at this point to indicate that it has symbolical meanings.

To resume the thread of the narrative, Siegmund, lost in meditation, lies prostrate upon the hearth. In the morning he is to meet this angry warrior, and his weapons are gone. His father has, in some measure, prophesied the situation. He remembers now that, in his most pressing extremity, he was told a sword would be furnished him. He muses, too, upon this most beautiful woman, fair as summer starlight. Who is she, and why does a strange, sad emotion rise in his heart as he thinks of her? Does he love this woman? And if so, why?

A sense of what his danger will be in the morning returns to him, and he is weaponless! Where is the Volsung sword that should serve him in this strife? The fire-glow falls upon the tree-trunk, where he sees a starry gleam that gladdens his soul. And he remembers that when the woman looked at the tree she smiled. The light now fades and he rests in the darkness.

Suddenly Sieglinda, a gentle presence, ap-

pears and stands before him. She asks if he is asleep, and, finding him awake, tells him that she has given Hunding a sleeping-potion, and that he, Siegmund, may flee and save his own life. She will show him a brave and goodly weapon, which, if he bear it away, will make him the bravest of all heroes. Then she proceeds to tell him its story.

When she, an unwilling bride, was wedded to Hunding,— when she was filled with dismay and fear,—an aged man in old gray garments, and a hat pulled down over one eye, appeared in the hall. The one eye that was visible flashed like that of a god. All seemed subdued by the power of its glance. Upon Sieglinda alone did he smile, and that smile had ever been her solace and her joy. When he smiled upon her, he swung a mighty sword, and then he plunged it to its hilt into the trunk of the old ash-tree.[1]

[1] While there is nothing in these dramas that tells the origin of the sword, various views concerning it have been advanced. Alice Leighton Cleather and Basil Crump, in their work before mentioned, state in a footnote: "This sword was discarded as useless by Fafnir when he was collecting the treasure, after killing Fasolt"; while Albert Lavignac in *Music Dramas of Richard Wagner* (1898) writes: "Wotan, having picked up a sword, forgotten by Fafnir, and which formed a part of his treasure, invites the gods to enter with him into Valhalla." In opposition to this a note found in the libretto speaks of the departure of Fafnir, after having collected the "whole

He who could pluck it out, the old man said, should have it as his prize. Warriors and heroes have tried in vain to draw it from the tree. No one of them could move it a hair's breadth! Well, indeed, does Sieglinda know who plunged the sword into the ash-tree. Well, too, does she know for whom the ash-tree holds it. If she could but find the one for whom it was destined; should he come to find her in her sorrow, consolation indeed would be hers! This means that her dearest dream has been that the lost brother would be sent to her rescue.

At the conclusion of this story, the youth at once embraces Sieglinda, telling her she is now held by him whom she has longed for.

Sieglinda, however, is alarmed. The youth has misunderstood her. He asserts that he

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treasure." It is the opinion of Bernard Shaw, expressed in *The Perfect Wagnerite* (London, 1898), that the visible presence of a sword in the dramatic representation, just before the gods pass over into Valhalla, is to give pictorial evidence of the sword motive which is then first heard, and that it is a part of the "stage management."

The dwarfs, Alberic and Mimi, held that the Ring and the tarn-helmet were theirs by right, but, while knowing the power of the sword and desiring to possess it, there is nothing to indicate that they ever made any such claims concerning it. Whether it was first possessed by the Nibelungs, and either discarded or forgotten by the giants, or whether it was a prior possession of Wotan's, like his spear, it may be considered as the embodiment of his resolution to create the new race.

will claim the sword, and, beside that, will claim her for his wife. Deep in his heart, he declares, are thoughts that link him to her. In her, he finds all that he has sought, all that his heart has longed for. He weeps over her wrongs. He feels himself degraded in her disgrace.

At this juncture, the door flies open and the bright moonbeams shine into the room. It is a glorious spring night and the storm has passed.

Sieglinda is absorbed in thought. She knows that it is for this youth that she has sighed. Her heart leaped forth toward him as he gazed upon her. She looks with wonder at the angel-light that breaks forth from his glorious eyes. But yesterday she had never beheld him, and yet his face is not strange.

The youth, for his part, assures her that he has ever beheld her in his dreams, and that his fancy has ever been filled with thoughts of her. Sieglinda has often seen her own face in the water, and she says that now, in him, she sees herself once more. Again she falls into deep thought. She seems to hear his voice from out the past, and yet she thinks it must be some echo of her own voice. Once more she scans his features. Yes, in his eyes she sees the eyes of the guest who smiled upon her at her marriage feast. She knew her father in that glance. Yet the stranger is called "Woeful."

Never again will he be called "Woeful." Sieglinda, herself, shall name him. But was Wolfing really his father's name? She must know. Wolfing had been a wolf only to the foxes. He swears that Volsung was his father's name.

Sieglinda is enraptured. Was Volsung his father? Then they are akin, for she, too, is a Volsung. Then for him the ash-tree holds the sword. As she loves him, she, Sieglinda, will name him Siegmund, and Siegmund shall he be called! It was at this time and in this way that he came by the name which, in referring to him, we have used. The youth affirms that henceforth he will take that name, and will prove his right to it with his sword. His father had assured him that "in sorest need" a sword should be ready for him. This is his need, and, with a mighty effort, he draws the weapon from the tree, and pronounces that "Needful" it shall be called. He now proposes to flee and to take Sieglinda with him.

Sieglinda has given the youth her brother's name, Siegmund, but she is now uncertain as to whether he is her brother or no. Is he really Siegmund? If he is, she will go with him joyfully, and he will have won a sister with the sword.

It is only in this moment that the relationship is known. Yes, sister she is, bride she

shall be, that Volsungs may abound and be blest!

It will be recalled that Siegmund typifies the heroic virtues as active in the world, the Valkyries essentially typifying the same idea, and that these heroic virtues were the product of the will and wisdom. Wisdom is abstract and does not at once appear to belong to the sphere of the affections. It has its place, however, as an element, in the moral order and in conceptions of righteousness. The application of wisdom is always rectitude or rightness,—correctness in feeling, thought, action, and result,—ultimating, however, in righteousness. The consciousness of rightness, or correctness in results, begets confidence, decision, valor, and strength. So the strength and valor of a race may be said to be founded in wisdom or rectitude,—in its truthfulness to principle. The virtues just named and kindred qualities are the heroic virtues, whose essence is expressed in the Valkyries, and which are active in the world as Siegmund.

For the new race, however, Wotan sought moral power, which we have seen is vastly more than moral perception. While moral perception implies the capacity for perceiving the good and the right, as opposed to evil and wrong, with divine law understood as a standard, moral

power implies, in addition, the capacity to act rightly. Moral power applies all that it perceives to living, performing fully and faithfully such duties as it recognizes. Duties so performed by men of moral power towards their fellow beings engender an interest in them. Interest in them begets kindness, kindness begets sympathy, and sympathy begets tenderness and humanity. These and other virtues similar in their nature are the gentle qualities, active in the world as Sieglinda; and the tenderness and humanity of a race are seen to be founded upon moral power.

Does it not appear that moral power—and its ultimate, love, individual or universal—could never have evolved without the foundation of wisdom or rectitude that underlies the heroic virtues; that in the heroic virtues lie latent the gentler ones; and that, when the gentler ones appear, the heroic are found enclosed and enfolded within them? May we not also believe that humanity and tenderness, once they have found a place in the world, will evolve into an efflorescence of universal love, and may we not regard the appearance of the gentler virtues in the world as the prehistoric beginning in the human character of that perfect state of future being referred to in the Scriptures—a state in which "man shall be as the angels"?

With the typical union of Siegmund and

Sieglinda, the heroic and the gentle virtues are beginning to be seen as united in individual character.

Where previous generations have perceived, striven, and fallen, this generation and those following will achieve.

Savage and barbaric man, emerging from darkness and obscurity, seemingly outside of nature's great, secret presence, perceiving and dealing only with the surface of things, never grasping their interior meanings, was a lonely, isolated being. Without spiritual, moral, intellectual, or even material ideals, his only means of advancement were his human feeling, his powers of observation, and his experience, which in time became most potent teachers. The great world lay before him in alphabetic symbol, yet no man now may say at what point in his development he first beheld it in lines of living light.

It may be assumed, however, that the warmth and brightness of the rising sun evoked his thankfulness; that the waxing and waning of the radiant moon, yea, and movements of the stars in their courses, awakened him to wonder and worship; that, above all, the yearly return of spring to the earth, with its ever renewed freshness and beauty, touched his heart and kindled his imagination to a sense of the eternal freshness of the world. "The awaken-

ing of spring" has been the meaning ascribed to the Volsung story; but the story means more than that—it means the awakening of humanity's great heart "touched to higher issues," to a pure idealism.

CHAPTER II

THE SPLINTERED SWORD

(ACT II)

"IN warlike array," Wotan leans upon his spear in a rocky pass. Brynhildr, fully equipped, is before him. The hour of battle is nigh, and Brynhildr goes to aid the Volsung, for Hunding must fall. She goes forth with joyous haste, yet pauses, for Fricka approaches in her car, drawn by rams, and goads her beasts till they are fainting. Brynhildr loves the battle, but for petty disputes she has no fancy. Wotan must take heed. And she leaves him to his fate.

Wotan, the will, has become a wanderer from Valhalla. He has detached himself from conventionality and conservatism, with their laws and their precedents, and he roams the world seeking a higher law. And now he must meet Fricka, when there is no peace where she

is, and he anticipates only the old complaints and annoyances. Fricka soon appears. She has sought him out, though she knows that he has the habit of wandering to avoid her.

What are the troubles with which Fricka is afflicted? Fricka has heard of Hunding's need, and, as goddess of marriage, seeks to give him her help. She urges the scourging of those recreant children who have wronged Hunding. Wotan wishes an explanation, and reminds her that love cannot be controlled by law. This is foolishness to Fricka. Wotan well knows that she complains on the ground of violation of the "conjugal bond."

He recalls to her that she, not he, presides over that bond, and that if her power has failed his own would be useless, for he can only rouse to strife.

Fricka expresses her dismay. When was such a thing ever known? Wotan signifies that now it is known, though hitherto never seen, and he informs her that Siegmund and Sieglinda are true lovers. He advises her to moderate the strictness of her views. In her wrath Fricka complains that the end of the rule of the gods dawned when Wotan begat these "vagrant children"; that she, his wife, is disdained and neglected for them; and that he has broken all the ties that his wisdom had established. First, Fricka was avoided for the

woman who bore him the Valkyrie brood; then for these barbarous maidens themselves, whom he led into battle; and finally, she complains of his wanderings as Volsung to beget these "pitiful children."

Wotan is forbearing toward Fricka. He explains to her that she cannot comprehend principles, but only understands statutes, that this is a case he must manage for himself. Affairs are so bad among the gods, that a man must come from some source, who needs no protection from them, who is not bound by their laws, and who may achieve where they have failed. Fricka considers that he is trying to deceive her. She denies that such a one would have any power whatever. Wotan asserts that the courage of such a one would be of great power.

She denies that there would be any courage save as Wotan, himself, supplied it. She will accept no terms. The Volsung shall not be protected.

Wotan pleads that the Volsung has ever lived without either protection or shelter, and that never has he been shielded by him, his father. Fricka demands that Wotan shall deprive Siegmund of all aid, and shall take away from him the sword of "magical use." Wotan explains that the sword is the Volsung's own,—that he has won it in the hour of need. Fricka

then accuses him of having arranged beforehand the need for which he gave the sword; asserts that she cannot be deceived, for by day and by night she has followed him; and declares that for the Volsung the sword was plunged into the tree, for the Volsung it had been preserved, and by Wotan's slyness the Volsung had found it. She may honorably do battle with Wotan, but such creatures as the Volsung she can only punish.

Wotan is in despair and answers nothing. She insists that when the battle is on, his protection be fully withdrawn from the Volsung, and Wotan, slowly and with hesitation, promises that he will not favor him. In addition she demands fair-dealing and that the Valkyrie's vow be recalled. But Wotan reminds her that the Valkyrie does not work from outside mandates, but only from the dictates of her own nature. Fricka asserts that this is not true, for Brynhildr follows the will of Wotan.

Wotan's heart is full of anguish. The Volsung has the sword and therefore cannot be defeated. Fricka demands that the power be withdrawn from the sword, or that he be sent to battle without his shield. The shouts of Brynhildr are now heard, and Fricka says that if she, herself, is held up to ridicule, the glory of the gods will have departed. Once more she demands the Volsung as her due.

In this extremity, Wotan gives his oath that the Volsung shall fall, and she departs.

Leading her steed, Brynhildr approaches. Fricka has sent her to Wotan for orders. Is the strife "without honor" that her father is so downcast? What may Brynhildr do for Wotan? Wotan bemoans that he is filled with despair, that he is bound by his own fetters and is less free than the children of earth. Brynhildr's heart sinks. Never has she seen her father so sad, so despairing. What is the secret that so oppresses him?

Then Wotan confesses that of all who live he is the saddest, that he is overcome by disgrace and shame that he cannot escape.

Brynhildr implores him to tell her the trouble that so appalls him. Wotan gazes long upon Brynhildr; strokes her hair, but cannot speak, lest his very heart should be laid open to her. Then Brynhildr reminds her father that she is his own will and, in speaking to her, he speaks only to himself. Wotan sees and understands this, and determines to speak.

When the illusions of youth had lost their hold upon him, his soul, he said, desired power. Without realizing its consequences, he stooped to deception, and made covenants that he did not mean to keep. He had been allured and tempted on by Loki, the subtle god, who then left him and did not keep faith with him. But

one thing, love, he has never given up. Without love he could not live, and he has clung to it through all.

Continuing, he tells her how Alberic, the Nibelung, broke forth from the lower world, and, by relinquishing love's passion, stole the beauteous Rhine-gold, which gave him all the treasure in the world; how the Ring, which Alberic had forged from the gold, he himself had wrested from the dwarf by cunning, and that this was only one of his two crimes. The other was that he had not returned the Ring to the daughters of the Rhine. That Ring was given, he says, to the giants as part of the price for building Valhalla. Erda, the mother of Brynhildr, had thought ill of the Ring, he went on, and had warned him of the dire consequences of keeping it. But, when he had asked to know more, she had been silent and had vanished. With her had vanished all his peace. Then he had desired wisdom, and had gone into the depths of the earth in search of Erda. By love, he had won her to his purpose, and she had given him wisdom from her secret stores. In pledge to him she bore him Brynhildr and her sisters. The Valkyries were valiant, and in their virtue he had seen a respite from the doom of the Æsir. They had brought him the bravest warriors from every fight to sustain Valhalla, the stronghold of the gods.

Brynhildr assures him that the Valkyries have ever faithfully done the will of Wotan. Why, then, is the heart of her father faint? He answers, because there are still more causes for his heart-aches,—Erda prophesied that the end was nigh. Though the Nibelung host threatens the gods, and Alberic vows revenge, these he fears not; but if Alberic should once more get possession of the Ring, all would be lost. Only he who has surrendered love, as has Alberic, may work evil by the Ring, and bring ruin and disaster to the gods. So he used all his might to keep the Ring from Alberic. Fafnir, the giant who slew his brother to gain the Ring, holds it with the treasure, and though it is justly his by "wage-earning," it must be taken from him.

Wotan says further that, because of his treaties with Fafnir, he is powerless. As he has ruled by treaties, so now he is bound by them. They are his bonds and his chains. But what he cannot do another may. A hero, unaided by the gods, might, from his own needs, work out the desire of Wotan's heart. But how find this man who could work Wotan's will and fight for him "'gainst every foe"? Wotan abhors his own work. The end he has sought has been in vain, for the one who is to do the work must be unfettered and actuated only by his own needs. Is not the Volsung such a one?

In his life with his son, Wotan has inculcated hatred for all laws and compacts made by the gods, and against all their enmity Siegmund holds only a sword. Fricka has learned the designs of Wotan, and decrees that Siegmund must fall. Brynhildr's surprise is unfeigned that Siegmund is not to be the victor. Wotan explains that the curse of the ownership of the Ring still follows him, and that it causes him to renounce and betray that which loves and trusts him. As Alberic awaits the end, so also does he await it. Now, he remembers that Erda said in her wisdom, that when Alberic should beget a son the end of the gods was at hand. Alberic has found for himself a woman and she has borne him a son. Alberic bought the woman with gold, and yet Wotan still searches for his free hero, who will work the weal of the gods.

Brynhildr is terrified at these words and knows naught to say to her distraught father, embittered to the core as he is. Wotan expresses his despair of ever finding the free hero and directs her to work the ends of Fricka, for Fricka's will is the law of Wotan. This would give the victory to Hunding. Brynhildr pleads with Wotan to recall these words, for as Siegmund is beloved by his father, so would she preserve him. But Wotan is inexorable. Siegmund must fall! All of Brynhildr's bravery

and strength will be needed, for he wields a sword of power. Yet Brynhildr has accepted the commission to shield and bless and this consecrates her to the cause of Siegmund.

The anger of Wotan is aroused! Will Brynhildr brave and defy her father? Has he so fallen that he is despised by his child? If his anger falls upon her, terrible will be her punishment! Brynhildr must fulfill the will of Wotan! Siegmund must fall! Wotan leaves Brynhildr in her grief. Never has her father so spoken to his beloved child; and her weapons grow heavy, for the battle will be evil.

As Brynhildr turns away, the Volsung children appear in the distance, Sieglinda pressing anxiously forward as if she would escape into the deeper shadows. Siegmund urges her to rest, and promises to guard her with care. But she cannot rest, for she is in despair. Siegmund had been a heavenly vision that had awakened all the rapture of her soul, and yet this rapture had turned into terror and fear. She had brought woe upon Siegmund. She is accursed and Siegmund, she declares, must flee from her. He refuses to do so, and decides there to await his foe whom his sword Needful shall defeat, thus avenging Sieglinda.

Soon the sound of horns and the baying of hounds announce the approach of the revengeful foeman.

Sieglinda's senses are deserting her, and she asks for one more glance from Siegmund's starry eyes, for the men of Hunding are strong and mighty, and his hounds are fearless. She says in her frenzy that the sword will be splintered and that the ash-tree will split in branch and stem. With one yearning cry "Siegmund!" she falls fainting at his feet.

He is gently caring for her as Brynhildr, equipped with shield and spear, and leading her horse, approaches them.

Desiring to be certain whether Siegmund will fall, she calls him. Only those behold her upon whom death has set his seal, and Siegmund sees her and asks the name of the creature "so beaueous and so stern." She answers that only, those behold her who must depart with her. Siegmund asks where she would take him, and she replies that by Wotan's will he will be taken to Valhalla.

Shall he meet Wotan alone? he asks. She replies that he will not, but that in Valhalla he shall mingle with bands of earth's bravest heroes, and shall find there his noble father.

Siegmund then asks if he shall find a wife in Valhalla, and is told that wish-maidens, the daughters of Wotan, shall welcome him and revive him with drink. Siegmund knows that the daughter of Wotan is "high and holy," yet he declares that he fain would know if he shall

meet Sieglinda there. But he learns that Sieglinda must remain on earth and that he shall see her no more. On discovering this, he sends greetings to Valhalla, to Wotan, to Volsung, to the heroes, to "the high-born wish-maidens," but refuses to accompany the daughter of Wotan.

Brynhildr has been beheld by Siegmund, and therefore there is no alternative. He must go. Siegmund asserts that he will never go, but that where Sieglinda lives there will he be found. But the brave and dauntless youth fights vainly against it. Once more Brynhildr announces death to him. By whom must he fall, he asks, and is answered "By the hand of Hunding."

But Siegmund bears a charmed sword, and holds that, with it, death may be defied. The giver of the sword now decrees death to the Volsung, he is assured, and is at last convinced that he is doomed. He turns to the gentle Sieglinda, so sad, so faithful, against whom "warreth the world," and whom he cannot shield. He calls down shame upon the giver of the sword, and will go to Hella, rather than to Valhalla.

The daughter of Wotan with whom he has been contending is, as he sees, young and fair, yet he is sure that her heart is hard. He asks her, if she cannot pity him, that she will at

least not speak of Valhalla. The heart of Brynhildr is now deeply touched, and she asks Siegmund to entrust Sieglinda to her protection. But Siegmund scorns the proposition. In life, none shall defend her save himself. If it is to be otherwise he will slay her. Though Brynhildr urges him, for the sake of the seed of the Volsungs, to forbear, he will not and seeks to slay both Sieglinda and her child. Brynhildr is now swayed by full sympathy for these unhappy children. She will aid them. "Sieglinda shall live!"

She commands that Siegmund shall answer the call to battle, and promises that, when the fray is on, she will come to his aid. Siegmund then bids farewell to Sieglinda till the battle is ended. She is lulled to sleep and forgets her woe. She dreams, and in her dream asks for her father; asks if he is still in the forest, and where the boy and her mother are. She sees in her dream the darkened faces of warriors; fire encloses the house; smoke arises; the house burns and she awakens! Hunding's voice is calling "Woeful" to battle, to be slain by Fricka's decree. Siegmund is not yet visible to Hunding, but he answers his foe that he is not weaponless, for from the ash-tree he has drawn the sword. Sieglinda rushes forward to part the combatants as they meet, and bids that they slay her instead of fighting each other. But

she falls back blinded by a flash of lightning which reveals Brynhildr covering Siegmund with her shield. As Siegmund aims a blow, Wotan appears through an opening in the clouds with his spear turned against Siegmund and before this weapon Brynhildr retreats. The sword of Siegmund is shivered and shattered by the spear of Wotan, and Hunding plunges his weapon into Siegmund's breast.

Sieglinda falls as if without life, and Brynhildr, in whom pity has fully blossomed into compassion, raises her to her horse and bears her away. Wotan gazes long and sorrowfully upon Siegmund, his son, his beloved! In anger he bids Hunding repair to Fricka and report the battle. But at the wave of Wotan's hand, Hunding falls dead. Wotan is now aroused to wrath. Vengeance shall follow Brynhildr who has dared to brave her father's will! He mounts his horse and follows swiftly in pursuit.

Wotan's spear was the emblem of his might, a might which was, however, only temporal. The haft of this weapon was a branch torn from the living ash-tree and therefore of high significance. The ash-tree signified all existence, in every ramification of the meaning of that word, and the haft must have stood for might or law in some deep, far-reaching sense. His weal depended upon his loyalty to the law which this spear symbolized. His laws, treaties, and

compacts were written in runes upon it, and when so written were inviolable up to the time he inscribed thereon an agreement that he did not intend to keep. This destroyed gradually his own might.

The sword in the ash-tree was power delegated from Wotan, a power which, however, had been weakened by the false treaty, and could be interpreted as any or all conservation of energy, which past generations store up for future ones.

Different ages require different weapons, corresponding to the beings who use them. Wotan, in the dramas, represents the dissolution of the influences of the past. He was not a moral force, while the evolution of Siegmund stands for the development of a moral standard. The sword of Wotan could therefore be of no use to the higher Siegmund, unless all the might of the past were to harmonize with and reinforce it. But the powers of the past arrayed themselves against it, and it was thus inadequate.

The conflict between Wotan and Brynhildr,—his better self and his transformed will,—is the conflict between the concentrated, yet vanishing forces of the past, and the advancing and cumulative influences of the future.

CHAPTER III

THE SOUL OF THE WOMAN

(ACT III)

THE battle is over; the bravest warriors have been chosen; and the Valkyries are speeding with them toward Valhalla. At the Valkyries' Rock they have rallied to await Brynhildr that she may lead them to the abode of the gods. Hither at last comes Brynhildr, with unwonted speed. She had never before made such haste. And at her saddle she carries not a warrior but a maiden. She guides her horse to the woods and reappears carefully supporting Sieglinda.

The Valkyries gather around their beloved sister, asking from what she flees and why she comes in such haste. She replies that aid is what she seeks, for she is pursued by the "Host-father." The Valkyries are filled with dismay. Surely she mistakes. Can it be true

that Brynhildr flees from the "Host-father"? She declares that he pursues her in frantic haste, and urges one of her sisters to speed to the mountain-top and tell her if Wotan is near. She learns that he is approaching the mountain, and comes in his anger upon a threatening cloud, and appeals to her sisters for shelter and protection for her companion.

The Valkyries with one voice ask who that companion may be. Brynhildr answers that she is Sieglinda, bride of Siegmund, and that the pair are the Volsung children who were doomed to destruction and death by Fricka's demands and Wotan's concurrence. By this decree Siegmund was to have been slain in battle with Hunding. From this fate Brynhildr has tried to shield Siegmund, but he has fallen, and she then took flight with Sieglinda. Surely, she says, her sisters will aid them both.

The Valkyries gather together in fright. Though they rejoice in the battle, they dare not defy the will of Wotan. Woe to Brynhildr that she has turned his anger against herself!

The clouds are advancing rapidly, and the tempest threatens to break over them, and Brynhildr seeks of her sisters a horse to bear Sieglinda away. But the sisters dare not defy their father's will, and refuse her request. Brynhildr makes a last appeal. She turns from one to another, but none dares brook the

anger of Wotan. None dares save the unfortunate Volsung. Sieglinda, in her gentle helplessness, implores that none be made to suffer for her, and the more because she prefers death to life. Brynhildr then stays her sinking heart, announcing the birth of the Volsung Hero, and declaring that Sieglinda must live. Then Sieglinda, realizing that she must preserve her life, resolves that she will live joyously. She is fired with an exalted courage and implores the sisters for the protection of their shields. But the storm is gathering and will burst. And those who fear it may flee. The Valkyries counsel Brynhildr to escape with Sieglinda lest Wotan's wrath reach her. But Brynhildr is unwilling to desert Sieglinda.

The sisters say that eastward there is a forest and in that forest a dragon, who guards a treasure within a cave. There Sieglinda may find safety from Wotan's wrath, for he does not venture in it. But Wotan is drawing near, so Brynhildr directs Sieglinda to go, and to go alone, fearing nothing and braving all things, into the forest eastward, for only there shall she be safe from the wrath of the god. And Sieglinda must go bravely, determining "all trials to bear, hunger and thirst, thorns and hard ways, to smile through all pain, while suffering pangs," for in the seed of the Volsungs lies the hope of the world. And Brynhildr

gives to Sieglinda the fragments of the splintered sword, which "renewed, the hero shall swing," and declares that this hero shall be Siegfried the "son of victory." Sieglinda then turns to Brynhildr, with gratitude and love for her "marvellous sayings." Comfort has come to her saddened and over-burdened heart. For the sake of the hero she resolves to live, and bids the maidens farewell.

Wotan's wrath now bursts over the mountain, and the "Host-father" appears, calling for Brynhildr, who is among her sisters. They respond to the call, and ask for the meaning of the dreadful summons. What have his daughters done? Why "rages the storm in the bosom of Wotan?" In reply Wotan denounces his daughters for defying him; forbids them to shelter Brynhildr, and pronounces her "outcast."

The sisters plead with their father for mercy to Brynhildr, but in vain. Wotan heeds them not. He has found that his daughters are "weak-spirited," and have not learned the lesson of hardihood and firmness. Brynhildr, herself, has, he declares, been untrue to her father. None but she knew the thoughts of his heart or the depths of his spirit, for all that he had designed, Brynhildr had wrought. She has defied his will, left his commands unheeded, and broken the faith. She cannot hide from

her doom, and stands forth from among her sisters to receive her sentence.

Wotan says, however, that he, himself, does not punish her. She has "shaped the stroke" for herself. Against the will that "awoke her to life" she has battled. Wish-maiden, she has wished against him; shield-maiden, against him she has turned her shield; lot-chooser, against him she has turned her choice; hero-stirrer, she has stirred the heroes against him. And so she shall be a wish-maiden no more, a Valkyrie no more, but henceforth only a woman.

Brynhildr is filled with awe and sorrow at these words. She is disowned. No more shall she bear dead heroes to Valhalla, no more go forth from its walls, no more shall she carry the flagon of mead in the halls of the Æsir! No more shall Wotan kiss his best beloved child! She is disgraced, degraded, exiled, banished forever. The Valkyries break forth into woeful cries for their sister, and for themselves. Brynhildr asks if all is to be taken from her, and learns that such will be the case. The curse of Wotan shall cast her into sleep, in which she may be seized by any man who chances to find and awaken her.

The Valkyries implore their father to recall the curse and the "grievous disgrace." They plead for their sister's freedom. But Wotan commands them to go and leave their sister to

her doom, threatening all who may aid her with a like punishment, and he exiles them from the mountain and from the Valkyries' Rock. The awe-stricken daughters of the god then hasten to their steeds, and depart with moans and cries. Brynhildr sinks to the feet of Wotan. They are in silence and alone, and she raises her eyes to the eyes of her father. Then she slowly rises to her feet, and asks if what she has done is so base, so dishonorable, that it shall deprive her of honor forevermore. Will the "Host-father" speak and make plain to her to what degree she is guilty, and why he thus casts off his favorite child? Wotan answers that the deed itself declares its guilt. But Brynhildr pleads that she followed the desire of Wotan, who had commanded her to shield the Volsung. The god then reminds her that he revoked the decree. But she replies that the decree was revoked only at the command of Fricka, and not by his own will, and that she knew well that he loved the Volsung tenderly and that for him his heart yearned. It was for this reason that she dared to shield him and give him aid. She recalls to her father that she is his true will and that held in her heart are his true wishes, which in his own heart are hampered by "treaties and covenants," and that, ever following him, she has seen and known that which he knows not. She had sought for Siegmund

to anounce his fate to him, but as she looked on his face, his "holy distress," his passion, his pain, his courage, his confidence, his might, the sight had made her heart beat with a "holy fervor." Serve him she must! "Safety or shame" she would share with him. This was what Wotan had hidden in her heart, and for these reasons had she disobeyed him.

Here Wotan sees and admits that Brynhildr has done for him what he wished to do but could not. Yet he is deeply injured that, penetrating to his deepest thoughts and desires, seeing him in trouble and wrestling vainly against himself, she had yielded to "blissful emotion" while he had quaffed the cup of bitterness. From him she shall henceforth be separated! Never more shall he greet her or share with her his thoughts and wishes.

Brynhildr insists upon justifying herself further. She declares that she understood naught but her own knowledge; that she loved all that Wotan loved. If Wotan will tear from himself all that is himself, let him remember that *her* disgrace is his own. His decree forbids her in future to follow him. She will then follow, instead, him whom she "must needs love." And if it is to be her fate to belong to a mortal, she implores that this mortal be not a worthless man. Wotan asserts that she has turned from him, therefore he may not change her fate.

Brynhildr then prophesies that the bravest of all heroes shall spring from the blood of the Volsungs, though her father has given up all hope of the Volsung line, and has admitted that he has "wrecked it in wrath," just as he has given up Brynhildr. She then asserts that she, who disobeyed Wotan, has saved the race of the Volsungs. Upon this she takes her oath. The sword hidden by the "Host-father" for Siegmund is saved for the child!

Wotan does not wish to be unnerved. He himself dashed the sword into splinters. Brynhildr must suffer her fate. He must away. Her wishes he cannot heed. The punishment must come. Her senses must be bound in unbroken slumber, and whatever man awakens her shall win her!

Brynhildr again implores that if unbroken sleep shall enfold and enchain her, none but a brave and dauntless man may find her resting-place. Wotan thinks that in asking this she asks too much.

Once more she pleads with him, that if he will not grant her first desire, he will at least grant this, that fire, fierce and glowing, may encircle and enwall her, to affright and deter the rash who would approach.

Wotan at length bids his "brave and beautiful child," the light of his eyes, the love of his heart, "farewell!" No more will he greet her,

nor ride forth with her, nor take wine from her hand; but when he shall leave her, her bed shall be lighted by "fiery gleams" and "brilliant torches," as she requests, and scorching heat shall sear the unwary that venture near her couch. The heart of Wotan is torn and shattered, and he gives her the kiss that withdraws her "god-hood" from her, and she sinks into unconsciousness. As she falls into his arms, he lays her gently upon the rock which is to be the rallying-point of the Valkyries no longer. Gently he closes her helmet. Gently he covers her with her long steel shield.

Then he calls to Loki, whom long ago he had subjugated. As he first found him, "a fiery glow," and bound him, so will he bind him again! He strikes his spear upon the rock, and Loki obeys. Fire darts forth from every crevice. The place where she rests is surrounded with a wall of flame, and Brynhildr is safe under the sheltering arms of a fir-tree. Wotan pronounces the edict that no one whose spirit fears the spear of Wotan can ever cross this barrier of fire. Then he turns sorrowfully from the scene and Brynhildr is alone.

The girl, Sieglinda, evidently formed no part of Wotan's plan for saving the gods, while it seems to be plain that the "free hero of worlds" should proceed from Siegmund. That Wotan gave little heed to the girl—to the higher phases

of the heroic virtues, that is—is seen in the fact that, during this last great scene with Brynhildr, in which she announces the coming of the hero from the Volsung line, he says, alluding to Siegmund's death, that *that* hope is lost and relinquished, wrecked in his wrath.

And what, we may here ask, was the crime of Brynhildr? It was that, being the transformed will of Wotan or his "primal will, reborn," she held in her heart his true wishes, which were good and beneficent, and that she could not do otherwise than obey them. She was moved by pity and aflame with compassion for those gentle children, Siegmund and Sieglinda, and between pity and compassion lies the whole gamut of love universal. Love can have no higher manifestation on earth than compassion.

Pity and compassion, of themselves, separated Brynhildr from those who dwelt in Valhalla. Its walls would have crumbled and fallen before the ever resistless power of their divine waves. Pity and compassion announce the soul of the woman, and in the exile and banishment of that soul lies the only hope of the gods. Brynhildr then is the true will of the world. The appearance of Wotan in the dramas, after his turning to wisdom, always represents the weakening influences of a dissolving past.

The true will, as typified by Brynhildr, is infinitely in advance of its manifestation in the

world, and therefore, until the qualities representing it grow to its degree and stature, it must slumber or remain quiescent. Brynhildr therefore sleeps, and the flames are the apparent difficulties and perils that lie before those who would attain to the high qualities which she represents.

SIEGFRIED

SIEGFRIED

CHAPTER I

THE NEW SWORD

(ACT I)

WE do not know what period elapsed between the passing of Brynhildr into sleep, and the appearance of Siegfried as a youth.

Siegmund and Sieglinda have paid the penalty for the infraction of earthly law, but the heroic and the gentle virtues have united in character and in the world, passing into a higher expression, and marking that period in the world's history whose exponent is love—love that is "without fear," and which is the "fulfilling of the law." These heroic and gentle virtues have fused and assumed a higher form than either could assume separately, and they *act as one.* The new epoch has come, and its hero is Siegfried.

In reference to the animosity between Sieg

fried and Mimi, it is well to remember that it is the old conflict between good and evil, for Mimi typifies deception and hypocrisy, Siegfried an exalted degree of truthfulness and discernment.

In a forest cave we see Mimi sitting before his anvil, gazing disconsolately at a sword. He is the smith who wrought the tarn-helmet, and is brother to Alberic. In soliloquy, he says that this is the strongest, stoutest sword he has ever shaped, strong enough for a giant;—and yet the stripling Siegfried will bend it like a straw. He speaks also of a sword of which he has the fragments, and if he could but weld *them* they would never again be broken. It would pay him well to mend that weapon, could he only do it.

Out in the forest-cavern, Fafnir, the wicked dragon, guards the Nibelung hoard. If Siegfried could only master this giant, the hoard and Ring would fall to him—Mimi. There is but one sword in all the world that can do this work, and that one is "Needful," which Mimi cannot mend. Alas! the very stoutest sword that Mimi knows how to shape, Siegfried twists and breaks. Yet if he does not forge swords, the boy is angry.

A stalwart youth, clothed in skins, carrying a silver horn slung by a chain around his neck rushes into the cave leading a bear. Mimi is

frightened. He is afraid of bears when they are alive, and directs that it be driven away. Siegfried—for it is he—in merry humor tells the bear to ask for the sword. Mimi at once informs him, in a conciliating way, that the sword has been forged. The bear, therefore, is returned to the forest.

The youth then explains that, during all that morning, he had yearned for better companionship than he found at home. In the forest he had wound his horn, and there came forth a bear out of its depths, and this beast he liked better, he declared, than he liked Mimi. Therefore he brought him to ask for the sword. Mimi brings forth the brand. He is sure that the sheen of it will please Siegfried. But what Siegfried desires is strength and temper, not sheen. So he takes it in his hands, bends it easily, and it flies to the floor in fragments. This weakness in the blades that Mimi makes leads him to doubt the smith's boasted skill.

Mimi, for his part, has a grudge against Siegfried—he charges him with ingratitude. If the youth does not get all that he wishes, everything that the smith has done for him beforehand is forgotten. So, at least, says Mimi. Will Siegfried never remember what Mimi has taught him about being thankful? He should delight to obey his benefactor, who has loved him so long.

Siegfried does not listen kindly to this, but turns away, and declines the food that is offered to him by his companion.

Mimi falls into soliloquy once more. So this is the reward for all his affection and care! The child that he had reared, fed, and "wrapped in warm linen," had grown up an ingrate, a "worrisome brat." He had taught him "all craft," and sharpened his "wits with subtle wisdom." But Mimi worries himself in vain, for the "hot-headed boy" roams and gives him no thanks!

The real relation in which he stands toward Mimi has, too, been the source of many a thoughtful hour to Siegfried. In spite of all his efforts he feels a repulsion for him that he cannot overcome. And at last he decides that the time has come for questioning him. He tells Mimi that he has been taught much by him, but why is it that he has never been taught to endure the sight of him without loathing? If Mimi gives him food, it fills him with disgust; if he spreads the couch for him, he cannot sleep; if he instructs him, the thoughts will not stay. When he sees Mimi slinking and shaking, he would gladly take him by the neck and end his "antics" for ever. Will Mimi answer truthfully, he asks, a puzzling question. When he, Siegfried, rushes into the forest to escape from Mimi, what is it that

makes him always return? It is, the dwarf says, because his heart clings so closely to him. But the youth bids Mimi remember the dislike he feels for him. Mimi replies that this is the way of youth; that the young need the "parent nest"; and that the name of this feeling is love. As the parent bird is to the nestling, so is he to Siegfried.

Siegfried admits that this is very "clever," but he asks further explanation. Every spring the parent birds sing bravely one to the other. The male brings the food and the female cares for the birdlings. If Mimi is the father bird, where, Siegfried asks, is Mimi's consort? He would know her and call her mother.

This questioning is very exasperating to Mimi. But Siegfried persists. Does Mimi mean that he, Siegfried, had no mother? Mimi is becoming greatly embarrassed. The boy must trust what he says, he declares; he is father and mother in one! Siegfried perceives that this is not true, and so he tells Mimi, for long ago he learned that the young are like the parent. Within the brook he has seen his own reflected form. If Mimi is his father, why does he not resemble him?

Mimi is now very much vexed, and will not answer him. Siegfried says that he has found out why he always returns to Mimi,—to compel him to reveal his parentage. Mimi is

astounded. What father? What mother? he asks.

Siegfried now grasps him by the throat. He intends that Mimi shall tell him what he wishes to know. All that he has learned, even language, he has wrested from Mimi by force. He now demands who his father and mother were.

Siegfried's grasp is like a vise, and Mimi capitulates. He will tell Siegfried what he wishes to know. Such a thankless boy! Mimi will tell him why he, himself, is so hated! He is neither father, mother, nor kin to him, yet his very life he owes to Mimi, who has been so good and kind to him. Preciously has he been repaid!

A poor woman, so he tells the youth, lay moaning with pain in the forest. He found her and gave her aid and shelter. She was in labor with a child; and Siegfried was born. All the help that Mimi could give her he gave, yet she died and Siegfried lived. Continuing, he says that to his charge she gave the child, which he had reared with such pains.

But Siegfried has heard that very often, and he turns from it impatiently. Who named him Siegfried, he asks, and what was his mother's name? Mimi has forgotton, yet stay! Sieglinda was his mother's name. And what, the youth next demands, is the name of his father.

Mimi does not know; he never saw his face. Nor did his mother tell the name of the child's father. She only said that her husband had been slain.

Now Mimi must give Siegfried a sign or the boy will think he lies. So, hesitating with embarrassment, he declares that he has a broken sword which the woman said the child's father had swung in the fight in which he was killed. This sword he has preserved for Siegfried! Let him forge it then, and that at once! All the weapons that he has made before have been toys; but this one will stand Siegfried in good stead before every foe. There shall be no "flaw" in the "faultless steel."

Mimi is frightened and shrinks away from the youth. In what way would Siegfried use his sword to-day, if he had it?

Into the world he would wander with his sword and never more return. The joy of the thought of freedom intoxicates him. Mimi is not of his kin, and neither his hearth nor his home is Siegfried's, and ne 'er again will he rest beneath this roof. As the fish darts through the water or the bird through the air, so will he go far hence and will never return.

In the exuberance of his joy, Siegfried rushes into the woods. The dwarf is alone, and turns his attention to the sword. He calls in vain for Siegfried. He is truly perplexed. A poor

old dwarf is he, who has reared this youth with the express purpose of turning him to account in the recovery of the Ring and the hoard from Fafnir. The sword is the necessary weapon for this purpose. Mimi cannot forge it himself, for no heat that he can make is great enough to melt the fragments, and no hammer can affect them. Mimi fears that it cannot be done. No, it cannot be done, at least not by Mimi nor any of his kind, for he belongs to a lower and lesser age, and his methods may not serve the ends of the moral being. This means symbolically, that deception and hypocrisy can never advance the ends of truth.

At this point of the story, an old man appears upon the scene, wearing a dark blue cloak, and a large hat with the brim hanging over one eye. He leans upon a spear as upon a staff. This is Wotan the Wanderer.

The Wanderer greets the smith and asks for his hospitality. This frightens Mimi, for it is a most unusual thing. Who is he who seeks Mimi? The stranger is called the Wanderer. He wanders ever, at his own will. Mimi begs that he will then wander on, and leave him in peace. But all who are good welcome the Wanderer. What evil designs has the dwarf, that he would shun him? Mimi complains that nothing but evil is ever present with him and that he does not wish the stranger to in-

crease it. The Wanderer has learned much and has helped many people in distress. Mimi wishes no help,—he only wishes to be alone. The Wanderer then tells him that when men have had much knowledge, and yet not quite enough, he has given them that which they have lacked. Mimi thinks that many people desire useless knowledge. He wishes no more.

The Wanderer seats himself, uninvited, and draws Mimi into a trial of wit. He stakes his head as a wager, betting that Mimi cannot ask a question that he cannot answer. Not knowing how to reply, Mimi decides to ask three questions of the Wanderer, thinking to entrap him. The Wanderer agrees to answer three times.

At this moment there was but one thing in the world that Mimi desired above all others to know, and that was how to forge the sword anew, but, his chief characteristics being deception and indirection, he asked for something else. He therefore asks a question whose answer he knows—"Who are they who dwell in the bowels of the earth?"

The Wanderer answers that the black dwarfs, the Nibelungs, dwell therein. He relates how black Alberic, by the wondrous power of the Ring made from the stolen Rhine-gold, became ruler of the under-world and gained all of its gems and treasures.

Mimi next propounds the second question, whose answer also he knows well. "What is the race upon the surface of the earth?" he asks.

The Wanderer replies that a race of giants dwell thereon; that Fasolt and Fafnir were envious of Alberic, and wished to obtain the gold; that in a strife Fafnir killed Fasolt, and, as a dragon, guards the treasure and the hoard.

Mimi would like to know something of the sword, but in accordance with his dark nature he asks something else—"Who are they who dwell above the earth?"

The Wanderer relates that the gods dwell above in Valhalla, that Wotan, the chief god, watches all below; that he, Wotan, had wrested a limb from the world's ash-tree, which he had formed into a spear-haft; and that the tree was spoiled, while the spear remained true. With this spear, upon the haft of which are written all laws, Wotan rules the world. The dwarfs, the giants, all alike must bow to the one who holds the spear. He now asks the dwarf if his head is forfeit or still his own.

Mimi's chance is gone and he is obliged to admit that the head is saved and the questions answered. Will the Wanderer now pursue his way? Not yet. Mimi should have asked what his welfare demanded, and not useless questions

He will now ask Mimi three questions upon the same terms. Mimi has become greatly frightened, but resolves to answer as best he may in order to save his own head.

Will the dwarf tell the Wanderer of the race beloved by Wotan yet condemned by him?

This, at least, Mimi can answer, They were the Volsungs, Siegmund and Sieglinda, and their son Siegfried is the most stalwart youth ever seen. Mimi feels elated that his head is still intact. The Wanderer signifies his satisfaction. The youth Siegfried is in charge of a wily Nibelung and is the hero who is destined to slay the dragon and possess the treasure. What is the weapon that he must use?

Once more Mimi sees his way. The weapon is the sword "Needful," which was placed in the ash-tree for the one who might draw it forth, and where all had vainly tried, Siegmund plucked it with ease. Thus it was Siegmund's sword until shattered by Wotan. The sword is preserved by a smith, for he well knows that with no other weapon may the dragon be slain.

The dwarf has answered well. Now will he tell who may mend the sword and give it its former power?

Mimi is confounded. All of his skill has been exhausted, and in vain, and he is the most

skilful of smiths. Truly he is now entangled! He cannot reply to the question, "Who may mend the sword?"

The Wanderer tells Mimi that three times has he, the dwarf, propounded questions foreign to his interests, and that now his chance is gone to know what he most desires to know. Yet he, the Wanderer, will tell him that *only he who has never known fear* may make the sword anew. To this hero, the stranger leaves Mimi's head in forfeit.

The Wanderer at length turns away and disappears, while Mimi, writhing in transports of fear, seeing only death and the dragon, takes refuge behind the anvil. Shortly Siegfried enters, briskly demanding the presence of the smith and asking about the sword.

Mimi from his hiding-place, behind the anvil, asks if Siegfried is alone. Getting an affirmative answer, he comes forth, and declares that it is not finished, for only one who has never known fear may weld the sword. Mimi shudders, for he well knows that in Siegfried's training this one thing he has neglected—he has never taught him to fear. He himself trembles with fear, however, because he has never taught this lesson to Siegfried.

What does Mimi mean by fear? It is something that he, Siegfried, does not know, but it was said by his mother that he must never go

forth into the great world till he had been taught to fear. Mimi has been so occupied with teaching him love for his benefactor, that he has truly forgotten to inculcate fear.

Never, never has Siegfried known this sensation. Will not Mimi teach him? he asks. The dwarf decides to do so, and promises to take him to a cavern where there is a monstrous dragon, Fafnir, who has killed many, and who will teach him what it means to be afraid. With all the eagerness of youth Siegfried demands where this monster is. He is told that it is at Hate-cavern at the end of the woods. Is that toward the world? Siegfried asks. Mimi answers "Yes." Then the youth calls for the sword to be produced, and declares his intention of going to Hate-cavern.

Alas, the sword! Mimi has known the most desperate fear, and therefore he cannot shape the sword. Let one try who has never known fear. Siegfried thinks Mimi is dissembling. He himself will mend his father's sword, he says. But he has never learned to work, and Mimi is very doubtful of his ability to accomplish the task. The youth, however, has put coals on the fire, and with the sword-fragments in a vise, he is rapidly reducing them to powder.

The dwarf looks on with astonishment, and timidly offers him advice. Siegfried will have none of it, for the dwarf has failed in all of his

attempts to perform the work. All of Mimi's theories are set at naught by Siegfried's proceedings. He looks with amazement to see the steel so handled, and foresees that Siegfried will triumph where his own efforts have been vain. He sees that the Wanderer, also, foresaw the same. He inwardly writhes that to this youth is his own head forfeit.

The sword is soon reduced to powder and placed in a crucible, and Siegfried blows the bellows, singing a merry song of the sword:

Why was the sword broken? From the ash-tree felled in the forest wood has been brought, and kindled to ruddy coals! The glowing coals shall melt it quickly. Let the bellows blow! Let the coals brighten! Soon Siegfried will swing the sword as his own!

Mimi is watching the process eagerly. He sees that the sword will be welded, and Fafnir slain. How, in that case, shall he make the treasure his own? He has forgotten for the moment that his head is forfeit. But, stay! he knows the qualities of many plants, and these he will distill into a draught, one drop of which will send Siegfried into a dreamless sleep. When asleep, the sword will end him quickly, and the Ring and the tarn-helmet and the treasure will be Mimi's own. In fancy, he beholds himself ruler of the world.

In the meantime Siegfried has sped in his

work. He has poured the molten steel into a mould and now tempers it by plunging it into water. Now he reheats it and shapes it on the anvil with mighty and cunning strokes. Then is the sword tempered once more, filed, hammered, and fastened to a handle.

Mimi has been occupied in brewing his broth, but still has watched the welding of the sword, until it emerges perfect, hammered, and sharpened. But in it he sees only his own triumph. Fafnir will be conquered and slain, and he chuckles to think of his own treachery and that the treasure and the Ring will be his own. Alberic will become his bondsman. Lord of Niebelheim he will then be! The gods will bow before him. Mimi will toil no more, but will draw to his service all the world. What triumph, what joy for Mimi!

Siegfried views his sword with delight and confidence. Never again shall it be destroyed. By him shapen, dead but restored, endowed with higher life, let it shatter all falsity, all deceit! He brandishes his sword and at the words "falsity" and "deceit" it falls upon the anvil—which in the dramas stands for servitude —and cleaves it in twain from top to bottom. At this Mimi is overcome with terror, for his own false nature brings him within the new power of the sword. Mimi could not forge it, nor Siegfried use it in fragments; yet the truth-

discerning hero reduced it to its elements and with the heat from the glowing coals of life's ash-tree has fused them anew. The fragments of the past are transformed into the weapon of the future. Now let evil cower in darkness and greed tremble! The forging of the sword signifies the sundering of the old conditions and the advent of the new!

CHAPTER II

The Dawn of Spiritual Power

(Act II)

SIEGFRIED represents the completed moral being. As every stage of advancement contains the elements of the next higher one, he should possess well-defined spiritual perception. He should be a being of discernment and of such discrimination as presupposes the highest and truest standards. That he is such is evinced by his penetration through the disguises of deceit and hypocrisy in every form in which they present themselves to him, and the impossibility of his being deceived by them. One by one, the subterfuges of Mimi are flung aside like cobwebs, until the dwarf himself is brought to the necessity of yielding his hidden knowledge.

In his own nature Siegfried divines many things. He perceives that the remnant of old power cannot serve the higher being, until

brought within the transmuting influences of that which is new. The fragments of the sword are therefore fused and welded in the glowing heat of the ash coals—symbol of life and of living in a greater and higher sense than ever before understood. It is thus that he succeeds where Mimi has failed. And with the welded sword, which again is but a symbol, a new power has arisen in the world. The sword of the spirit advances spiritual perception, which is the dawn of spiritual power.

It is night at Hate-cavern, and Alberic, the despoiler of the Rhine-gold, keeps a vigil there. Through his prescience he is aware that the fateful day approaches in which the hero will appear by whose power Fafnir will be slain. As he watches he detects a light gleaming in the darkness, and hears heavy hoof-beats as of a steed approaching. Who is it that comes gleaming through the shadows? It is Wotan the Wanderer, who has ventured to draw near to Hate-cavern by night. He, on his part, demands who confronts him.

Alberic recognizes the Wanderer as Wotan and recoils in anger and in wrath. Each questions the other. Does black Alberic live with Fafnir? Why is Wotan there? Let him go hence! The Wanderer comes not as a worker but as a witness, and who may hinder him?

Alberic salutes Wotan as a "worker of magic,"

and tells him that were he himself as dull as he once was, the Ring might be taken. All of the god's tricks and weaknesses, however, he declares that he now knows. With Alberic's wealth Wotan has paid all his debts to the giants for the building of Valhalla, though the price agreed upon with the giants was written and is still recorded in runes on Wotan's spear. If to-day the price were beguiled back from the giants, the spear would split like a straw!

Wotan affirms that he was bound by no "righteous compact" to Alberic, and that the dwarf shall feel the strength of the spear even as he has felt it before. Alberic sees that, proud and boastful as he is, Wotan shows that his spirit sinks before what must come. The curse uttered by himself decrees the death of Fafnir. Who then shall inherit the treasure? Alberic is sure that it is this question that troubles Wotan, but when he, Alberic, once more grasps the Ring, let the gods and Valhalla tremble, for the world will be his own.

Wotan well apprehends Alberic's plans and schemes, but he will not be anxious till the Ring be won. The intent of Wotan now is that the Ring be restored to the Rhine-maidens, yet as the lower never understands the higher, so Alberic attributes to the god his own cupidity and greed. Alberic sees that Wotan has the fullest confidence in the Volsung, and believes

that, through him, he expects to receive the Ring and the hoard.

The Wanderer bids Alberic settle with Mimi, as it is he who brings the foe. The youth with Mimi knows nothing of Wotan, but he is the decreed slayer of Fafnir. Once more the Wanderer warns Alberic, and tells him the boy knows naught of the Ring.

But Alberic desires to extract a promise from Wotan that he will leave the hoard unmolested. Wotan will, however, make no terms whatever with him. The hero, Siegfried, is left to work in his own way, and alone he must stand or fall. He is free, and in him and his freedom only has Wotan faith.

Alberic once more tries to compel terms, for his struggle is but for the Ring. But the Wanderer turns from him; already the youth approaches. Two greedy Nibelungs await the issue and he, Wotan, will awaken Fafnir.

While Alberic is lost in conjecture whether or not Wotan means that to the dwarf will fall the treasure, the dragon is awakened, and stirs sluggishly, asking who has disturbed his sleep. The Wanderer assures him that the person who has roused him is a friend who warns him of danger. His life will be spared if he will yield his treasures. And Alberic, advancing, tells him that a hero comes who will slay him.

The dragon is hungry for just such a one.

But the Wanderer warns him that the boy is brave and very bold. Alberic adds that it is the Ring that the hero seeks. If the dragon will but give the Ring to him, Alberic, he in turn will preserve him from harm. Fafnir is sluggish. He asserts his ownership of the Ring, and wishes to be left to sleep.

The Wanderer finds much amusement in Alberic's discomfiture. He will give Alberic that upon which to ponder. All things, he tells him, act according to their own nature, and nothing can alter them. Let Alberic encounter Mimi, who is more easily overcome. Wotan announces that he will depart, for that which will come will come quickly. He disappears. Alberic is full of anger and wrath. He would gladly see all the gods perish. He will watch and be wary, for "envy works out his own ends." Just as Alberic hides among the rocks and trees, Mimi and Siegfried appear. Mimi shows the youth the cave, and himself passes into the shadows.

Siegfried is in no haste. He sits down under a lime tree to rest and to meditate. Here, in this spot, he will try to learn what fear is. They have travelled far, and for the future he and Mimi will be apart. If he does not find fear here, he will never find it anywhere. But from Mimi he will be forever free.

Mimi, in the shadows, views Siegfried and tells him that the great dragon that lives in that

cave can swallow him at one gulp. His breath is poison, his spittle shrivels men up, and his tail so curves and twines that it grinds to atoms whatever it grasps. These gloomy statements do not appall Siegfried, who asks if the dragon has a heart, and if it is located as other beasts' hearts.

"The dragon has a hard and cruel heart," says Mimi, "and doubtless in the usual spot."

Mimi feels a sense of discouragement that, as yet, Siegfried shows no symptoms of fear. The bold Siegfried sees already that with "Needful" he will find the dragon's heart, and then, perchance, know fear. Mimi insinuates that when Siegfried has seen Fafnir his head will swim, and his senses desert him, and that then he will remember Mimi and the love Mimi has shown him.

Siegfried is angry. His perception tells him that the dwarf's love is a sham, and he detests shams. He wishes, he says, to be alone. Mimi promises to go at once, but he will linger near the spring, where daily the dragon comes from the cave to drink at the fountain. Siegfried thereupon tells the dwarf that he will allow the dragon to go first to the fountain, and then, when he has swallowed Mimi, and not till then, will he seek his heart. And he advises the dwarf to be discreet and depart. So finally Mimi takes his leave with the hope that Siegfried and Fafnir may kill each other.

Alone, at last, Siegfried seats himself under the lime tree. He is lost in happiness because Mimi is not his father. He will think of him no more.

His own father was doubtless stalwart and strong like himself, and very brave.

But his mother? He cannot imagine his mother. Lovely she must have been, and her eyes must have shone more softly than the "fallow doe's." He queries within himself why she should have died. Do all mortal mothers die and leave their children behind, desolate? Oh, that he might but once behold his mother!

The birds in the trees above him attract him by their singing. Happy, joyous birds! Could he but understand their songs, what might they not tell him of his mother? One sings quite near him. He remembers, now, that Mimi has told him that one could learn to understand the birds. He will cut a reed, fashion it, and sing with this songster. If he could but grasp the music, it would teach its own meaning. After trying many times vainly, he relinquishes the effort, for he cannot wake the song. Failing in this attempt, he resorts to winding his horn, for only lately he had called a bear to him by so doing. The sound of the horn rouses Fafnir, who shows himself, monstrous and horrible to the sight!

Siegfried knows that his horn has called forth the dragon, who slowly rolls his cumbrous length forward and pauses at the sight of the hero. Then he speaks, asking who this brave and daring stripling is.

Siegfried rallies him, jestingly expressing his surprise that he, a beast, should have speech. Will the dragon teach him, he asks, the meaning of fear, to learn which he had come? The beast, for answer, displays his dreadful fangs, and threatens to devour the youth. But Siegfried does not intend to satisfy the appetite of the dragon. It were better to kill him at once. He therefore attacks the monster, sword in hand, parrying a blow from its tail, which lashes violently, exposing its breast to Siegfried, who plunges the weapon to its heart, and brings the beast near to death's door.

The dragon, in these dramas, is the emblem of greed. The blood of the monster symbolizes the life of greed. The life of anything is that within it which is true. But is there anything true in greed? Nay, not in it, but underlying it: for greed is built upon honest desire, effort, industry, perseverance, thrift—a false superstructure upon a true foundation—and is not truly greed until it desires and obtains that which is not its own, or, having attained it, withholds that which belongs to the world, thus failing to measure up to the standard of moral law.

Through the long night, while Fricka and Wotan slumbered upon the grassy slope, these giants had labored toilsomely for their chance of possessing the lovely, winsome Freia, and in the joyous day, when they had accomplished their task, they had attested their own unworthiness of the promised reward.

Fafnir, though vanquished, is still alive, and asks to know the identity of the youth who has sought his life, and who has incited him to this deed. Siegfried replies that he does not know who he is, and that he alone, the dragon, has tempted him to the deed.

The sword has now pierced Fafnir to the heart. Wounded to the death as he is, he remembers the old-time honesty and generosity of the giants. He resolves to utter a warning, that the youth's life may be saved and the world enriched. The eager youth must learn whom he has slaughtered. Once a race of honest giants ruled the earth, he says. Fasolt and Fafnir, two of this race, are now both slain. Fafnir dealt death to his brother Fasolt to obtain the Ring, and, as the last of the giants, he, Fafnir, tells the boy that death is in store for all who may possess it. And he adds that the one who has spurred Siegfried on has also planned his death. Let the youth take heed!

At this the youth asks the dying monster as

to his own parentage. His name, he says, is Siegfried.

"Siegfried!" With the utterance of this name, the dragon expires. The soul of greed has passed!

Siegfried quickly draws forth his sword, reeking with the dragon's blood. His hand is smeared with it, and as by accident he puts it to his lips the blood burns like fire. But what marvellous change has befallen Siegfried? The birds are still singing in the branches, and now he both hears the song and understands its meaning, for the life of the slain has strengthened the heart of the slayer. The bird nearest him sings that Siegfried now possesses the treasure and the hoard; that he will find them in the cave; that if he obtains the tarn-helmet it will gain him wondrous power; and that, if he also obtains the Ring, it will conquer the world for him.

Accordingly Siegfried enters the cave. Outside Alberic and Mimi appear and wrangle for the treasure and the Ring, each vehemently asserting his own rights, the former claiming that he stole the gold and shaped the Ring, the latter that he forged the tarn-helmet.

Alberic claims, too, that, without the knowledge given by the Ring and imparted to Mimi, the helmet could not have been forged. And he prefers the idea of giving Siegfried both Ring

and helmet to allowing Mimi to have either. But Mimi has nourished and kept Siegfried from infancy, and therefore he maintains that he has his rights. Yet he will give up his right to the Ring if permitted to have the tarn-helmet. He and Alberic will then be brothers in power and will divide the treasure. Alberic, however, denies Mimi every right, and Mimi relies upon Siegfried to crush Alberic.

Siegfried now appears bearing both the Ring and the tarn-helmet. Both dwarfs have disappeared, Mimi to the woods, and Alberic to the clefts. The young hero views his prizes with thoughtful interest, but cannot understand that such trifles can be of any use to him. They are certainly the articles mentioned by the bird. They will, however, be of service as witnesses that he slew the dragon and knew no fear.

Once more the wood-bird sings its song, which says that Siegfried now holds the Ring and the tarn-helmet, and warns him to beware of the crafty hypocrite Mimi, who is approaching. Siegfried understands. Mimi wonders, as he comes, whether Siegfried has ever met with the Wanderer and whether he has been taught the wondrous power of these prizes. He will be very artful indeed and will entrap the boy. So he asks him if he has learned to fear.

No, Siegfried has not learned to fear, but he has slain the dragon—foul beast that he was!

The death of the dragon grieves Siegfried, however, for there are those more evil than he. He hates the instigator of the deed more than he hates the dragon.

Mimi now says very softly to himself that as Siegfried has worked all that he, Mimi, has planned, a deep sleep shall fall upon the youth, while he, Mimi, will possess himself of the prizes he covets.

Siegfried's perception is now fully awake, and all that Mimi thinks, Siegfried knows, so he answers that he sees through the schemes of his guardian, who is seeking his death, and who, he well knows, hates him and his kin. Mimi continues to plan evil in his secret thoughts. He will give Siegfried some of the drink he has brewed for him, for he is weary from the toil. He brewed the drink while Siegfried beat the sword. Soon the sword will be his own.

Siegfried reads his thoughts, and asks if he will take the sword as well as the Ring and all of the booty. Mimi complains that Siegfried distorts all his views. All that Mimi thinks or says, he contradicts. Then the dwarf urges him to be obedient, as he has been in the past, and to take the drink which he offers to him in a bowl. Siegfried would gladly have a pleasant draught, but from what, he asks, is this brew made? Mimi urges Siegfried to try it. He will then praise Mimi's skill. The dwarf's mind

swarms with evil thoughts. Soon Siegfried's senses will be dark, and his limbs will be stretched out, and he will not move. Then Mimi will seize the Ring and the tarn-helmet, and with the sword will straightway cut off Siegfried's head.

Once more the dwarf offers the drink. Siegfried, who knows his thoughts, grasps the sword and with one blow lays Mimi dead upon the ground, and throws the body into the cave with the treasure. The monster he then drags to the cavern's mouth, which it completely closes.

So all deception and hypocrisy are slain, as lust and greed were slain before them; and man thereby attains to full spiritual perception, in which spiritual power dawns. Alberic, however, still roams in the world and as hatred and malice lurks, hidden, for his prey.

Siegfried is aweary. It is noontide, and once more he flings his length upon the bank under the lime tree. He wearies of his lot, for he feels lonely, is without father, mother, or sister, and has had but a gruesome companion—a dwarf, whom he has slain. Of the gentle bird that sings in the trees, he asks but for a friend. Often he has asked for one, but to no purpose. The wood-bird sings in reply that, now that he has slain the dwarf, there awaits him a beauteous wife, and that she sleeps in a guarded spot on the mountain, surrounded by flaming

tongues of fire. If his courage be great enough to awaken her, she shall be his bride.

At this, delight overcomes the heart of Siegfried, and he tells the bird that he will hasten away. But he asks if it is really true that he may awaken the maiden and claim her as his own. The bird rejoins that Brynhildr is to be awakened only by one who knows no fear.

The youth is then convinced that he and none other is the man that shall find the sleeping bride, for has he not this day tried in vain to learn from Fafnir what fear meant?

But who, he asks, will show him the way?

The bird, in answer, flutters softly over his head, and Siegfried follows where it flies.

CHAPTER III

THE PERIOD OF PEACE

(ACT III)

IN the defile of a mountain, the Wanderer seeks counsel of Erda. He has summoned her from the depths that she may impart to him needful lore from her stores of universal knowledge. Erda, stately with the power of reserve, appears, and asks who it is that awakens her from sleep. He replies that he is Wotan, the Wanderer, who awakens her with songs. There are no counsellors on earth who may match her in wisdom, for all that the world contains she knows. Wotan awakens her that she may impart some of her knowledge. Erda says that in her sleep she is wont to search for "wisdom's weapons," but the Nornir are awake while she sleeps. And she asks Wotan why he does not inquire of the Nornir. Wotan, in

replying, reminds Erda that the Nornir are "controlled by the world," and they can ward off no evil, while the wisdom of Erda may teach him how to arrest disaster.

Erda's thoughts are bewildered by "mortal workings." She tells Wotan how she had once been subdued by a god, to whom she bore a wish-maiden, stanch and wise, and she counsels him to seek her, Erda's child. Wotan asks if she refers to Brynhildr. Alas! Brynhildr has, he says, disobeyed Wotan, and has worked "defiantly" what he had purposed but relinquished. The anger of Wotan rests upon Brynhildr, and upon her has fallen "magic sleep," a sleep not to be broken until she shall be awakened by a man. Wotan cannot, therefore, take counsel with Brynhildr!

Erda passes some time in thought. She then tells the Wanderer that, since she awoke, she has been weak, and that because her child is in "penance of sleep" the world is strange to her, and that she shares the drowsiness of the wish-maiden. Why is Wotan dissatisfied with his own deeds? She will depart.

But the Wanderer does not consent to her departure. She has filled his heart with the fear of "fatal extinction," and now he asks that she give him wisdom to guide his way safely through the difficulties that beset him. But Wotan has awakened Erda from her sleep

in vain. The "restless one" must cease his efforts. She will sleep.

Wotan bids her listen, declaring that before his will her wisdom must wane. That which she prophesied, he now decrees—the end of the Æsir! Once, in despair, he made a resolve that now he abandons "without anguish." He relates that a "Volsung, most winsome," has found his way to the Ring; that he has "full largess of love," but no malice; and that, therefore, Alberic's curse will rest lightly upon him. This hero will awaken Brynhildr, and she will release the world from its woe. He bids Erda sleep, and foresee in her sleep the end of the gods. Ever will Wotan "hail the heaven of love." The god then calls upon Erda to depart, for the hero, Siegfried, comes.

When Siegfried appears the Wanderer is invisible. Siegfried has been following the course of the bird, and has lost its direction, but he is in nowise discouraged, and tries to discover the direction in which it flew. A voice from an adjacent spot calls to him in friendly greeting, and asks whither he goes. In his perplexity he thinks only of his quest, and wonders if the voice can guide him. He therefore answers that he seeks a rock upon which sleeps a maiden, surrounded by fire, and that he goes to awaken her from her slumber.

The voice inquires who has told him of the

maiden, and he answers that the song of a bird has told him of her and has sent him in quest of her.

"Who may understand the meaning of a bird's nonsense?" says the voice derisively, and further it inquires how he knows the purport of the bird's song.

He replies that, at Hate-cavern, he had slain a dragon and by chance a little of the blood had touched his lips and tongue. Then at once he had understood the meaning of the bird's song. And how was it, asks the voice, that he slew the serpent? Siegfried replies that the dwarf Mimi had attempted to teach him the meaning of fear, and, for that purpose, had brought him to the dragon, which he slew.

The young hero has now come nearer, and the stranger asks who made the brave sword that he carries. The youth proudly confesses that he made it himself. The stranger wishes more information. Who shaped the fragments from which it was made? he asks. Siegfried says he does not know, but he does know that they were useless until "welded afresh." This is joy to the Wanderer's heart, and he laughs long and cheerily that his Siegfried has so well discerned, and so well wrought, that which is true. Siegfried has become tired of the queries of the stranger; wishes to pursue his quest, and asks directions of Wotan.

The Wanderer has awaited this moment too long to be put aside so unceremoniously. He thinks some deference is due him on account of his age, at least. Siegfried, however, has only a short time since gotten rid of one old fellow, and he does not wish to be troubled by another. He hints that he may serve the stranger as he served Mimi. He notices, at this point, the large hat of the Wanderer, with its rim hanging over one eye, and rallies him about it. The Wanderer replies that he wears his hat in that way when he travels against the wind.

Siegfried perceives the evasion and tells him that an eyeball is gone, and that he thinks it quite likely he has been over bold in stopping some one in his course. He also expresses a wish that the stranger would take himself off.

The Wanderer wishes to set himself right in the matter of the eye, and affirms that he sees plainly where the youth cannot see, and that an eye like the one he lost looks at him out of Siegfried's face. By this speech, with its double meaning, the Wanderer means that the spiritual perception, exchanged by Wotan for Fricka's laws and their temporary advantages, has again been attained to in the world, and is embodied in the person of Siegfried. The youth becomes impatient and again demands to be shown the way to the magic rock. But Wotan demands some form of recognition from his beloved

Volsung. Did the youth but know his identity, he would pay him full heed. He realizes that he has taught the Volsungs no love for himself, though to their "lineage bright" he bears the fullest affection and devotion, and does not wish to be tempted into destroying Siegfried as well as himself.

Siegfried has become out of patience and wishes the stranger away, for this interruption has caused him completely to lose sight of the bird that is guiding him to his bride.

The Wanderer, on his part, becomes very angry and says that the bird fled to save its own life, for the raven who is lord of all ravens hindered it, even as the youth himself has been hindered. The Wanderer stands forth to bar the way. Siegfried demands who he may be, and by what right he bars the path. Wotan replies that he is the guardian of the mountain, and whoever wakens and wins the slumbering maid destroys the might of the guardian forever. He magnifies the difficulties that will beset the man who perseveres and penetrates the circlet of fire that surrounds Brynhildr. But Siegfried is unshaken; heeds him not; and bids him away.

The Wanderer does not listen. Advancing with his spear, he once more bars the path, telling Siegfried that the sword he bears so proudly has once been shattered by his

own spear and that again it may be so shattered.

Vain boast! Siegfried now knows him for his father's foe, and with one blow hews the spear into fragments.

So perishes the might and power of the past, with its magic and its runes, its laws and its precedents, its treaties and its compacts. The Wanderer, vanquished, disappears among the trees and is lost to Siegfried's view.

But what of Brynhildr? Uncounted centuries have dawned, have waxed, have waned, have vanished, yet Brynhildr sleeps. But at length the anvil of dull servitude has been cleft in twain; the monster Greed has been o'ermastered and has yielded his stupefying gains; deception and hypocrisy no longer vaunt themselves; and the might and power of all the past have fallen.

Does not the maiden sleep uneasily? Are her pulses stirred by no premonitory thrill? Who may say? In simple, sacred majesty she sleeps, and the hero comes!

Siegfried, advancing, beholds the fiery glow and knows that his quest is wellnigh ended. Gayly, proudly, he proceeds on his upward course, merrily winding his horn as he plunges into the circling fire. Forward, steadfastly, he goes until he gains the summit. The place is the same at which the war-maidens gathered after

the battle between Hunding and Siegmund, — the Valkyries' Rock. The hero sees the war-horse, Grani, slumbering tranquilly and also — a more amazing sight—a warrior with helmet down and bearing a long steel shield. It glitters and blinds Siegfried! Shall he lift the vizor from the face? Shall he remove the long steel shield, that the warrior may be more comfortable?

He cautiously unfastens the helmet, and long, rippling, curling hair bursts forth. The hero is filled with wonder. He listens gently to the sleeper's heavy breathing, and finally tries to raise the shield. But it is held by rings of steel. He then tries his sword, cuts the rings, lifts the shield, and before him, in soft, womanly garb, lies the maiden Brynhildr.

There is a tumult of emotion within the heart of Siegfried. This is not a man, but a beauteous maiden! Now he remembers that it was a maiden that he came to seek. His heart is filled with "a holy awe," and his senses swim. His head sinks upon her bosom. He wishes her eyelids might open, yet, should they, he knows that the light would blind him. Everything swims before his dazzled eyes. Can this sensation be fear? He thinks it must be. He calls to his mother, and tells her that a maiden, wrapped in sleep, has at last taught Siegfried to fear! Brynhildr's lips beckon,

yet affright him. He tries to awaken her, and yet she sleeps. He will kiss her lips though the doom be death. He does so and Brynhildr awakens.

Siegfried is full of surprise and agitation. Neither he nor the maiden can speak for a time, from some mysterious, nameless emotion, which Brynhildr is the first to express. She hails the day, the sunshine, and the light. Long has been her sleep. Who is he, she asks, that has awakened her? Siegfried answers that it is he who has burst the fiery barrier, climbed the mountain, and awakened her.

She hails the gods, the world, and all nature, glad that the spell of sleep is broken, is ended, that she is awake, and that it is Siegfried who has awakened her. The young hero is filled with an unknown rapture. He salutes the one who gave him birth, the earth his fostering mother, that he should have been brought to behold this loveliest sight.

Brynhildr too, overflows with the same solemn emotion. She too, gives praise to the being who bore him, and to the earth that has fostered him, rejoices that it had been ordained that the glance of but one being was to fall upon her, and that being, Siegfried. For him alone was she to awaken! Siegfried is a hero, sanctified, and lord of worlds. Ever he has been her object, aim, and thought. Ever she has fostered

him. Before he was born, she had brought him her shield; she has always loved him.

Siegfried thinks at this moment that possibly she may be his mother, and timidly queries if his mother had really died or only slept. But Brynhildr assures him that she is not the mother of Siegfried. Never will he behold his mother. But she, Brynhildr, is himself, if his pure spirit can love. All that he needs she can teach him, but her highest wisdom grew only when she loved him. She has ever loved him, and has ever discerned Wotan's "intention." She had never named it, but only recognized it, felt it, fought for it, and struggled for it. And this had condemned her to sleep. The intention of Wotan was that her love should be Siegfried's.

Siegfried is charmed by ner tones and her singing, but its meaning does not quite reach him. Her eyes brighten and illumine him. His heart is soothed by her words. Yet he cannot fathom them. She fills him with fear, who never before felt fear.

Brynhildr has observed the presence of Grani, and now understands that he, too, has been awakened by Siegfried. Half sadly she looks upon her helmet and her shield that will never protect her more. Siegfried assures the maiden that his heart is fatally wounded by her, for he has approached her without shield or helmet.

And Brynhildr realizes that her one-time protection is gone, and that she is but a weak woman.

Siegfried assures her that he has come to her through an ocean of fire, with neither shield nor helmet for defence, and that the "billows of fire" that raged round her do now rage in his heart. He clasps her in his arms! But he must not so hold her. No god has ever touched her, and all the heroes have reverenced her. Woe to him that he has so dishonored her! Had she not said that all her highest wisdom came through love of him?

Brynhildr is bewildered, and gloom seems ready to engulf her. She is full of fear and of horror! Siegfried bids her open her eyes to the sunlit heaven of his love. But the sun-bright day seems to her to fall only upon her shame. He is "the hope of the world." Will he not leave her unmolested, unmastered by his might? Let his image ever shine in her heart as in a clear and limpid pool, undisturbed by waves and ripples. Will Siegfried, who is her love and her lord, not leave her to rest?

Siegfried assures Brynhildr that he loves her, and he has no more self, if she loves him!

Now at length Brynhildr understands! She has awakened to the love for Siegfried because Siegfried himself has awakened to her. She pledges herself to him. His has she ever been, his will she ever be!

Now Siegfried's bold and brave courage returns! His fear, that he scarce could attain to, is forgotten. Joyously and gladly Brynhildr gives her love to him. Let Valhalla fall with its vast and stately towers; let the Æsir "end their reign," the Nornir "rend" their "rope of runes"! Let the dusk of the gods approach! Still Siegfried remains her own, "forever and for aye."

Siegfried, too, rejoices that Brynhildr is his own. She smiles upon him. All hail to the heavens and the light and the sun and the world where she lives! Laughing, she greets Siegfried. Still ever and aye is she Siegfried's Brynhildr!

And both, in the light of love, cheerfully smile upon death and change.

Here spiritual perception, through the influences of the transformed will, typified by Brynhildr (quiescent in ideal, but active and operative in the world as Siegfried), attains to its fulness, and in its fulness spiritual power has dawned.

All redes and runes, all knowledge and wisdom Brynhildr imparts to Siegfried in this solemn union, which symbolizes a period of peace in which mankind shall learn to understand all things.

THE DUSK OF THE GODS

THE DUSK OF THE GODS

PRELUDE—THE END OF TIME

IT is night of the same day in which Siegfried awakened Brynhildr, but "day" and "night" in these dramas, are but terms, it should be remembered, to express periods whose duration is unknown. Even now Siegfried and Brynhildr are in an adjoining cave, which constitutes their temporary dwelling.

On the Valkyries' Rock are the three Nornir, the daughters of Erda, commonly called the three fates. They represent the past, the present, and the future. They are passive rather than active agents, and their office seems to have been the recording, rather than the making, of history. They behold a light, and wonder if it can be day. It is but Loki's flame about the rock. Why should they not spin and sing? But where, they wonder, shall they stretch the heavy golden cord or rope which they carry with them?

The first Norn, the past, fastens the cord to the branch of a fir-tree, and sings of how she once wove at the world's ash-tree. It was green and strong with verdure. Beneath it was a fountain, Erda's fountain, and wisdom glowed through its translucent depths. This Norn sings that there she sang a mystic song. A god desired to drink from this fountain, and parted with one eye to obtain the draught. Then from the world's ash-tree did he wrest a branch and shape the shaft of a spear. The wound never healed in the tree, the wood cankered and withered, and the fountain dried. Sorrow now filled the heart of the Norn, who weaves no more at the ash-tree, but now must weave at the fir-tree.

She hands the golden cord to the second Norn, the present, that she may weave, and tell why these things have been. The second Norn winds the cord about the stone at the mouth of the cave, and in a song tells of the truthful runes that Wotan inscribed on the shaft of his spear to make his treaties inviolate. A bold and strong hero, the song goes on to say, has destroyed the spear (or the might) of Wotan, and this witness of all bonds and treaties has been shattered. Then Wotan, the second of the fates sings, summoned the heroes and warriors, who shivered and split the arms and the trunk of the ash-tree. Now that the ash is destroyed the spring will be dry. She asks the third

Norn, the future, to sing if she knows how this happened.

The third Norn throws the end of the rope behind her. She sings of the noble abode of Valhalla, built by the giants, where, surrounded by heroes, Wotan sits. She tells how "heaps of fagots" from the world's ash-tree are piled about Valhalla; and of how, when the fagots are fired and when the fire fiercely burns and "wasteth the fair-fashioned walls," the end of the gods will be at hand. She then throws the cord back to the second Norn, who in turn throws it to the first one. The first Norn ties it to another branch of the fir-tree. She knows not if it be dawn or daylight, or whether the fire of Loki flickers. She scarce remembers the marvels of long ago, when Loki was only known by his moving "in burning and lambent flame." And she wonders what the work of Loki was.

The second Norn, taking the string, sings that, through the power of the spear, Loki was subjugated by Wotan. Struggle as he might he could not throw off his bonds, and lastly, at the point of the spear, he was compelled to girdle with fire the rock of the Valkyries. And the sisters ask themselves what it signifies.

The third Norn weaves and sings that Wotan's spear, split into fragments, was dipped "in the burning one's wavering breast," and a

brand kindled and thrown upon the "forest of fagots" from the world's ash-tree. If the sisters would know what this portends, the string will be stretched.

The first Norn knots the string and sings that her sight fails, and that she cannot "find the fibre," and that the cord tangles and frays. A fearful sight confounds her senses. She now remembers the Rhine-gold, stolen by Alberic, and asks herself what it meant. The second Norn takes the cord and wraps it around the edge of a stone. She complains that the keen edge of the stone cuts the cord; that it is worn thin; that also Alberic's curse comes to her angrily; and that it, too, imperils the cord. What will be the result? The third Norn tries to catch the cord, but she cannot reach it. If it is again to be thrown, she must stretch it. Then it breaks!

Here ends the record of all the wisdom of the Norns. They tie their bodies together with the golden rope, and thus ends the past, the present, and the future. Henceforth they are as one, for eternity now dawns.

As the Norns disappear in the increasing light, Siegfried and Brynhildr come forth. Siegfried's union with Brynhildr signifies full spiritual perception. She has taught him all the heavenly runes and all that wisdom may impart. He will now go forth into the world,

as was the wont of heroes in the almost unrecorded past. Brynhildr, herself, sends him, but he goes also "from his own needs" to "fresh exploits," all unconsciously to work eternal ends. Brynhildr parts from him with but one misgiving, the fear that she does not quite fully possess his heart, or that there may be something in his own nature, because descended through a mortal woman, not fully consecrated to wisdom.

Siegfried tells her that she must not chide if he is "still unlearned," for she has taught him more than his mind and soul can grasp. One thing he understands fully, that for him Brynhildr lives and that he worships her. Brynhildr adds that if ever he would awaken her to fondness, let him but recall his brave and dauntless courage in braving the fiery flames, fearlessly passing them, and awakening the "shield-covered maiden." But Siegfried's aim and end was to find and awaken his Brynhildr. Let Siegfried but recall their troth and their pledges, for never had affection been truer!

Siegfried will leave Brynhildr in the "leal defence of the fire," but in return for her runes and her teachings he will give her a Ring, whose virtue, as he thinks, has been the mainspring of his deeds. He gained it through destroying a dragon, and it shall be the bridal gift of Siegfried to Brynhildr. She receives

the Ring with joy and places it upon her finger. In return, she bestows her horse, Grani, upon Siegfried. The horse has lost his magical powers, and no more may pass through the clouds; but upon earth he will bear Siegfried bravely. The youth, panoplied with Brynhildr's armor, upon her steed, knows his victories will be gained through herself alone. No longer is he Siegfried, but is as "Brynhildr's arm."

Then they sing of their oneness. Each ever is with the other. Each is the other; apart, undivided; divided, still one.

Such is the parting of Siegfried and Brynhildr. Siegfried will go forth into the world, or what in our story constitutes the world. Here he will meet with the adverse elements that ever stand in the pathway of the true spiritual hero, and which the Christian religion has recognized as "the world, the flesh, and the devil." When our hero appears among them, they will rise to measure themselves against him. If in his whole nature he has been united to Brynhildr, he will be the victor, but if, with or without knowledge of his own, there be any portion of himself unattuned to wisdom, through it he must be chastened.

Lust and greed have been destroyed or have lost their force in the world. Deceit and hypocrisy have shared the same fate. But Alberic,

as "envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness," is yet an active agent against spiritual truth and power as expressed through Siegfried. And the dwarf works through Hagen, his son. The evils to come are instigated by Hagen, as representative of the evil still active in the world.

The story now goes on to relate that Alberic, loveless, has wedded the widow of Gibich, and that she has borne him a son, Hagen. He is half-brother to Gunther and Gudrun, and is the active agent of Alberic and Alberic's curse. Of the special powers pertaining to the Ring, Siegfried knows nothing. Neither knows he aught of Alberic or Alberic's curse.

Wotan said that the curse of Alberic would rest lightly upon Siegfried, because he was without malice. Neither Siegfried nor Brynhildr could wield the power of the Ring, even if they knew its power, for both are consecrated to love—Brynhildr, as the world's highest ideal; Siegfried, as the highest expression of that ideal. And now that the grosser evils in the world have been slain, Siegfried goes forth to find and destroy the more refined and subtler ones that would ally him to themselves and deprive him of his power.

CHAPTER I

THE TEMPTATIONS OF THE WORLD

(ACT I)

THE story now lies in the great world, and its temptations are the more refined ones, such as "the lust of the eyes and the pride of life," for the grosser ones the world's hero has slain.

Gibich has reigned in his kingdom on the bank of the Rhine, and his throne has been inherited by his two children, Gunther and Gudrun, who occupy it jointly. Neither is married. At the opening of this part of the story they are in the hall of the Gibichungs, in consultation with their half-brother, Hagen.

Gunther asks Hagen, his brother, who possesses great shrewdness and acumen, if his, Gunther's, government of their kingdom on the Rhine is to the glory of their race. Hagen assures him that his actions are so ordered as

to cause much envy to himself. Gunther protests against this feeling. He should be the envious one, for if it be true that he and his sister have inherited the throne, wisdom has certainly been given to Hagen. It was, it should be said, however, subtlety, and not wisdom, which passed for wisdom in the world, and it was subtlety which was possessed by Hagen. Hagen professes that his own wit has been at great fault, or he would long ago have procured for Gunther greater good fortune than he has ever dreamed. It is a grief to him that Gunther has no wife, and that Gudrun is unwedded. He relates that a fair maiden, surrounded by fire, lives upon a mountain rock, but that no one who cannot brave the fire may woo Brynhildr.

Gunther's interest is aroused, for he would fain woo this beautiful maiden. Hagen assures him that the right is reserved for a stronger than he, for Siegfried, the Volsung, who has been reared in the forest, and has grown into a stalwart and mighty youth. The mention of Siegfried has enlisted the interest of Gudrun, and she wishes to know what his deeds are.

At Hate-cavern, she is told, he has slain the dreaded dragon with his own wondrous sword, and has gained the hoard of the Nibelung. With this victory he has, in addition, subjugated the

world and enslaved the Nibelungs. To no one but Siegfried will the fire be merciful.

Gunther is angry. Why tempt him with a treasure that he may not win. Hagen is very crafty, and now suggests that if Siegfried gave the maiden to Gunther, she would undoubtedly be his. Gunther sees that this is true, but how bring it to pass? Hagen mentions that Gudrun might work a spell upon Siegfried. Gudrun seemingly dissents from this suggestion. Hagen continues that in their shrine there is a potent drink, which, if Siegfried should taste it, would banish all memory of women from his mind, and bind his heart firmly to Gudrun.

Both Gunther and Gudrun inwardly assent to this plan, but Gudrun stipulates that she shall first see Siegfried. Hagen foreknows that when Siegfried journeys forth into the world he will not pass them by, for his course lies through the kingdom of Gibich and the children of Gibich. Already he hears a horn, and a boat containing horse and man appears in view. Siegfried is nigh.

With strong steady strokes of the oar, he moves his vessel to the landing place. Without doubt, this is Siegfried himself. They greet him who is already on his way to them, and soon he enters the hall of the Gibichungs. Gudrun, who has viewed his approach, withdraws at his entrance. The youth is bidden a

royal welcome, and called by his name. While this has excited some surprise in him, he has been assured of their knowledge that he could be none other than the brave and intrepid Siegfried. They tender him the freedom of their hall with all that it contains. "Soil and serfs," even Gunther himself is pledged to his guest. By his body, Gunther so swears.

What now has Siegfried to offer in return for this largess? A sword and his stalwart limbs are his only possessions. He will swear by his sword. Hagen reminds Siegfried that he possesses the Nibelung's hoard. Siegfried has entirely forgotten the stuff which he left at Hate-cavern. Did he leave it all there? asks Hagen. Siegfried remembers now the tarn-helmet at his belt, but pronounces it a bauble and says that it has no use. Hagen instructs him that it is a mighty talisman (the power of the wish or desire) and that when placed upon his head, any wish made will be realized at once. He also asks the youth if he brought nothing else. Nothing but a Ring, says Siegfried. And Hagen then asks if he wears the Ring. No, is the reply; a glorious woman wears it. Hagen knows that this woman can be none other than Brynhildr. He has sought this information for his own purposes, and also to suggest to Siegfried the giving of gifts to Gunther. Gunther, however, refuses all tender of gifts.

Gudrun here enters, bearing in her hands a drinking horn, which she offers to Siegfried in the name of the house of Gibich. Up to this moment Siegfried has been filled with the thought of Brynhildr, and he pledges himself anew to her as ever his bride as he drinks to the house of Gibich. Even as he drinks, he finds himself gazing at the fair Gudrun with a swift, sudden surge of feeling, before which her gaze falls guiltily. Who is this fair creature who, before his eyes, has suddenly blossomed into transcendent beauty? Her face fills his soul. What, he asks, is her name?

Gunther answers that her name is Gudrun. Are the runes good that he reads in her eyes? asks Siegfried. Should he offer to serve her, would she repel his gifts as her brother has done? Gudrun answers not, but leaves the hall. Siegfried gazes after her spell-bound, and asks if Gunther has a wife. He is told that Gunther has no wife, but that his heart is set upon a beauteous woman whom he may never gain. The young hero asks how the case would stand if he should become Gunther's friend.

Gunther assures him that the case is hopeless, for she lives upon a far-off rock, and is hedged about with flames, and no one may gain her but one who can brave the fire. Siegfried appears bewildered, and repeats the words of

Gunther as if he were trying to recall something dimly remembered. Gunther adds that he, himself, may not enter the fastness.

The youth then says that he fears not the flames and that he will bring the woman to Gunther if in return Gunther will yield to him his sister Gudrun. Gunther accedes to these terms gladly.

Siegfried thinks that the tarn-helmet will disguise his shape and that in Gunther's form he will climb the mountain and return with the woman. They swear the oath of blood-brotherhood, letting blood drip from wounds inflicted in their arms, into a horn of wine, and drinking of it, each to each. Shall either brother fail the other, let blood flow from his heart.

Hagen breaks the horn with his sword. But why, asks Siegfried, has not Hagen joined in the pledge? The reply comes that this is because the blood of Hagen is too sluggish and too cold. Siegfried wishes to go forth upon his quest at once. Gunther shall go with him a certain distance and shall there remain awaiting his return with Brynhildr. Hagen is installed as the head of the household during the absence of Gunther, and to Gudrun it is announced that upon their return she will become the bride of Siegfried.

Hagen then has visions, and dreams dreams as have Alberic and Mimi before him,

and the dreams are interpreted to mean that ultimately the Ring will be his own. It is a curious world, he muses, in which a mighty man goes up the Rhine to bring down his own bride to Gunther. They are strange and frail creatures, all of them, but they shall yet all serve the son of the Nibelung!

Brynhildr, at the mouth of the cave, meditates and thinks lovingly of Siegfried, her own. She gazes thoughtfully upon his Ring, but is soon suddenly startled. She hears the rustling sound as of a wind-horse coming through the air, and hears the voice of her sister, Valtraute calling to her.

Valtraute descends and fastens her steed and timidly approaches the spot where Brynhildr awaits her with a welcome.

How dares she come, Brynhildr asks, to the banished sister?

She replies that she comes for Brynhildr's sake, and for that cause has braved the anger of Wotan. Brynhildr answers that she once wrought the thing he desired in shielding Siegmund, and though he condemned her to sleep his anger had ceased. She knows this, because he granted her boon to surround her with fire, till the hero should come and awaken her. Siegfried has come and has taken her for his bride, and her existence is light and joy. Does Valtraute desire to share the

"pure bliss" of Brynhildr? the latter inquires.

No, Valtraute does not. She calls the language of Brynhildr insane and wild, and does not understand it. Grief and anxiety have brought her here, and the same hasten her return.

Is aught wrong with the Æsir? Brynhildr asks.

Valtraute relates that since the father parted with Brynhildr he no more sends forth his daughters to the fray. They go without direction if at all, for he goes through the world as a homeless Wanderer. Lately he returned with his spear broken and splintered, and, calling together the warriors, with signs bade them hew down the world's ash-tree. This they did, and by his direction stacked the parts of the tree about Valhalla. Now, speaking no word, and appointing the trembling heroes to gather round in ranks, he sits, holding in his hand the broken spear. Holda's apples he will not eat, and the gods are stiff and frozen.

The Valkyries gather round him beseeching, awestruck. Valtraute herself pressed weeping to his bosom, but his heart turned to Brynhildr. His woe burst into utterance, and he said that when the Rhine-daughters should receive the Ring, the curse against the gods and men would be ended. Valtraute supplicates that

what Brynhildr can do she will do! The latter, gazing at the Ring on her finger, listens as in a dream. She has lost the link that bound her to Valhalla, and this plea seems to her vain and wild. What is it all to her?

Valtraute now sees the Ring. Will Brynhildr give it up to Wotan? Will she not surrender it to the Rhine-daughters? But Brynhildr cannot, she dare not, she will not give up her wedding ring, which symbolizes the price that the world pays for its own ransom. Brynhildr is its faithful guardian.

Vainly Valtraute pleads that Brynhildr cast the Ring far away from her into the Rhine; that the world's well-being hangs upon it. Valtraute pleads but for a past whose end has come. Brynhildr reasons with her sister. She tells Valtraute that she cannot understand the inestimable value of this Ring. A single look upon it is more to her than the weal of the Æsir or all Valhalla. Its glowing, shining beams reveal the love of Siegfried. Let Valtraute return to the gods and tell them that Valhalla may fall in ruins, but love shall reign in her heart, and the Ring is its symbol.

This too is the will of Wotan. But Valtraute calls woe upon Brynhildr, woe upon the sisters, woe upon Valhalla. And, springing to her horse, she is away.

Brynhildr, sitting by the cave, and gazing

into the distance, hears the welcome peal of Siegfried's horn. Siegfried comes—her own! She rushes forth to meet him—why blazes the fire so fiercely?—but meets not Siegfried, but another wearing the tarn-helmet, with its vizor partly down, exposing only the eyes. The stranger gazes at her in silence. Brynhildr is shocked and full of horror, for no man may cross the flames but Siegfried, the hero. She demands who the stranger is.

She is told that he is a lover who will make her his wife. Brynhildr is afraid. Only Siegfried may approach this rock, and yet this stranger is not he. She thinks it may be an eagle to rend her, or perchance a demon. She asks if he be mortal or a devil. He answers that he is a Gibichung, whose name is Gunther, and who will take her to wife. Brynhildr now thinks that this may be a part of her punishment and that she more fully understands her doom. She holds out the Ring. No shame may touch her while she wears that circlet. But the stranger says that with that Ring she shall wed Gunther. She demands his departure.

In the struggle that follows, he takes the Ring and captures her for Gunther, but between himself and Brynhildr he places the sword "Needful." Thus is guarded the honor of Brynhildr, and his oath to Gunther.

There is a word to be said here as to the love-

potion that is introduced into these dramas. As has been written by some one, such use seems to betoken an interposing circumstance or condition outside of or beyond the knowledge or volition of the participants themselves. Siegfried has yielded to the "temptations of the world, the flesh and the devil," and has forgotten for the time his high union with the wisdom and love of Brynhildr. There is yet something in his nature unattuned to the nature of Brynhildr, and therefore the union between the world's highest ideals and their highest expression is of necessity still incomplete.

CHAPTER II

In the Market Place

(Act II)

GUNTHER and Siegfried have departed on their journey, and Hagen watches before the hall of Gibich. He sits at his post as if asleep, but with spear in hand and shield at his side.

The region is mountainous, and there are altars at hand dedicated to Wotan, to Fricka, and to all the other gods.

Night has fallen when Alberic, as in a dream, seeks an interview with Hagen, his son; but he fears that Hagen is asleep and will not hear him. At the address of Alberic, Hagen signifies that he is awake and will hear him.

Alberic has come to remind his son of the mighty spirit with which his mother has endowed him, and to tell him that events are at hand in which he must use it fully. Hagen admits that his mother has endowed him well, but he regrets that his father has been Alberic,

for his lot in life is weakness and he hates those who are happy and joyous. Then Alberic is encouraged to hope that Hagen's love is his own, as no one is more wretched than he. If he and Hagen can but combine their forces, they may overcome their enemies. Wotan, who robbed Alberic of the Ring, has come to harm and is wrecked by the Volsung. The gods and the heroes together await the end. Alberic asks Hagen if he is listening.

Hagen replies that he is, and asks, "Whose, by right, is the power of the gods?"

Alberic asserts that it belongs to himself and Hagen. If Hagen will join him they will conquer the world. The giant was killed by the Volsung, to whom the Ring is but a toy. The Volsung cannot be harmed by it, for he does not know its power and does not use it, but it makes him lord of Valhalla and of Nibelheim. There is nothing ahead for him but laughter and love. Still his ruin must be attempted. Hagen replies that already the Volsung's ruin is planned.

Alberic's plans are to get the Ring. The Volsung is beloved by a woman, and she has it. Should the Ring be returned to the Rhine-daughters, it could never be recovered. Every effort must be made to regain its possession. Though Hagen was too weak to kill the giant, his force of mind and his hatred will aid Alberic

in gaining the day. To this very end has Alberic planted the inveterate hatred that exists in Hagen's breast.

Hagen declares that he will obtain the Ring. He swears to do it. And, adjuring Hagen to be true, Alberic vanishes in the waning light.

As morning dawns, Siegfried, in his own character, appears and greets Hagen, who returns the greeting. He has come from the Valkyries' Rock by direct flight. He announces that Gunther and Brynhildr will appear later. Hagen calls Gudrun, and Siegfried announces the success of his mission, claims Gudrun as his bride, and preparations are ordered for the reception of Gunther and Brynhildr.

Siegfried relates to Hagen and Gudrun how he appeared to Brynhildr, wearing the tarn-helmet, with the semblance of Gunther; how they set forth from the mountain, travelled some distance to the bank of the Rhine, where they were to meet Gunther, and how in a flash he and Gunther were "reversed." Then, having the helmet, by its virtue he wished himself at his destination, and in a twinkling he was there.

In the meantime the boat is in sight, and Gudrun gladly makes ready to welcome her brother and Brynhildr. Hagen blows a powerful blast on his horn to call the vassals and

retainers, while Gudrun issues orders for the women and the maidens.

They come in troops, each and all asking the cause of their summons. Is their lord in trouble? Is he menaced by foes? Why are they thus bidden?

Hagen announces that their lord has wedded a beautiful woman, and that he is even now bringing her home. He orders that they prepare sacrifices for the altars that all the gods may aid at the nuptial ceremony, and that merrymaking be planned to conclude the celebration.

The grim Hagen smiles, and the vassals think, therefore, that merry times are at hand. Gunther appears among them with Brynhildr, stately and pale, and they give her gracious greeting. Hagen craftily incites them to love her, to be loyal to her, and to revenge promptly any wrong done her. The vassals hail Gunther and his bride joyfully. The latter presents Brynhildr to his people, praising her charm and her nobility, and he predicts that the star of the Gibichungs is now in the ascendant.

Gudrun and Siegfried now enter to extend their greetings. Gunther felicitates them both upon their happy union. Brynhildr stops short in amazement at the presence of Siegfried, for up to this point she has not seen him. How account for his presence?

All view the scene with strange wonder, while Siegfried tells Brynhildr that he has espoused Gudrun, and that she is to become the bride of Gunther. At these words the maiden faints in Siegfried's arms, and, as she recovers, sees the Ring on Siegfried's hand and asks wildly how it came there.

Hagen inwardly rejoices that his plans have been thus effective. While all are anxiously awaiting the end, he bids them listen to her story. Brynhildr attests that the Ring was wrongfully taken from her by Gunther. And it is asked how, then, it became the property of Siegfried. The youth denies obtaining the Ring from Gunther. Brynhildr again accuses the latter of taking the Ring and insists that he compel Siegfried to return it to her. Then Gunther denies ever having given the Ring to Siegfried. Once more Brynhildr demands of Gunther that he tell her where the Ring may be that he wrongfully took from her. In his genuine perplexity he does not reply. At this point Brynhildr seems to understand that he who took the Ring from her could have been none other than Siegfried.

It must be recalled that the love-potion given to Siegfried by Gudrun has destroyed in his mind all memories of Brynhildr prior to his seeking her for Gunther, so he now insists that no woman gave him the Ring, but that he won

it through killing Fafnir, the giant and dragon.

Hagen here sees his opportunity and tells Brynhildr that if she is sure that it is the same Ring, and if she gave it to Gunther, it is Gunther's still, whereas Siegfried has won it through treachery. She agrees that it was through the most shameful treachery.

Brynhildr now again remembers her punishment by Wotan, and wonders if this was all included in her dreadful doom. She asks that the gods grant her revenge—the ruin of the man who has wronged her.

We have traced the character of Brynhildr from its origin, and have found it to be without blemish, a model of peerless womanhood, utterly free from hatred, treachery, or revenge. Why then is she represented as calling down vengeance upon him who has wronged her? Is it because under similar circumstances women are often revengeful? Or is it because the original character belongs to a cruder conception of womanhood than the present? It is true that crude, undeveloped, undisciplined womanhood, which, however, is quite undeserving of the name, is sometimes but not always revengeful and treacherous, but the incomparable Brynhildr, "protectress of worlds," is the loftiest of ideals and should be understood as possessing the truest and most enduring patience. Whatever may be the reason for Brynhildr's desire for

revenge, the trait of character it reveals has no part whatever in her nature as traced through the dramas, in this interpretation.

The character of Brynhildr, however, has not as yet been quite fully indicated in the story. As Wotan's transformed will, she is the true will of the world, and as such must possess, in kind, if not in degree, all the attributes of divine will. In her, therefore, is vested the prerogative of expressing divine justice as well as divine compassion and mercy. Regarded in this light, her invocation to the gods becomes a natural act, directed not necessarily to Siegfried or to Gunther, but to the one who has wronged her, an act which falls upon Hagen, the initial offender in the case, as the instrument of Alberic, but also in degree upon all who have aided him in the work. Instead, therefore, of being a revengeful act, it is an act done in obedience to divine justice, pronouncing its condemnation upon evil.

To continue the story, Siegfried denies Brynhildr's accusations, and the wildest confusion reigns. All desire that he clear himself. He, however, is completely bewildered and calls for a weapon upon which to swear. Hagen extends his "unsullied spear-point," and upon it Siegfried swears his oath—that wherever steel may harm him may it strike, if he has wronged his friend or injured this woman! Brynhildr

comes forward, puts aside Siegfried's hand, places her own upon the sword, swearing her oath and sacrifying the blade to his destruction, for his oaths, she vows, are broken, and he is perjured.

The confusion still reigns, and Siegfried, who does not fully understand it all himself, advises Gunther to take Brynhildr away, suggesting that time and rest will calm her. Privately, and in an aside, he tells Gunther that he is afraid the tarn-helmet only partly hid him, and that he must have done the work badly. He thinks that the anger of women subsides quickly, and that one day she will thank him. So completely has Siegfried forgotten Brynhildr!

The young hero shortly starts the merriment by seeking Gudrun and gathering the vassals into the hall. Brynhildr, Hagen, and Gunther remain outside. Brynhildr ponders the situation. She, it must be remembered, has not had her recollection dimmed by any mystifying draught, and she cannot understand the conduct of Siegfried, from whom she parted so fondly but yesterday. The runes of wisdom do not avail her, and she concludes that he has taken all her wisdom from her. As she understands the matter, she is his, held by his might, and she laments that she has been so easily transferred from him to Gunther.

The crafty Hagen is ready to assist her, and he himself will wreak vengeance upon Siegfried. Brynhildr smiles at the thought of the weak and puny Hagen doing bodily harm to the stalwart hero and asserts that one "angry glance of his glittering eyeball" would "subdue" his "most mettlesome daring." She tells him that, in his own might, he is powerless. He asks if there is no way to compass his revenge, no cunning that she may impart. She replies that there is none; and yet, after thinking, she says that, though she has used all her runes of knowledge to protect him in every part, she has placed none at his back, knowing that he would never turn his back to the foe.

Hagen quickly perceives his opportunity—Siegfried must be approached and struck from behind. He vows it shall be done. Gunther is dejected and disconsolate. Shame and sorrow confront him. Hagen gives him full sympathy, while Brynhildr discerns that timidity and cowardice have ruled him, and that without valor he had hoped for "valor's reward." Gunther himself knows this, that he who has found himself deceived and betrayed is himself the deceiver, the betrayer. He relies for help upon Hagen, but Hagen says that there is no help save in Siegfried's death; that the broken bond of blood-brotherhood demands his death.

Gunther temporizes, and wishes to be assured

that he has really been betrayed. Brynhildr assures him that Siegfried has betrayed him and that all have betrayed her. Her righteous scorn falls upon Gunther, for whose offence a world of blood could not atone. If Siegfried dies, he will die both for his own treachery and for that of Gunther.

Hagen secretly tells Gunther that Siegfried's death means that he, Gunther, will obtain the Ring and with it the tarn-helmet and the hoard. It is now quite plain that Siegfried's death is part of the plot to gain the Ring.

Gunther, to be certain, asks if he means Brynhildr's Ring. Hagen replies that that is his meaning. So all assent to the death of Siegfried.

Gunther remorsefully thinks of his sister, Gudrun. Could they face Gudrun after slaying Siegfried? Brynhildr here, for the first time, seems to grasp the fact that with Gudrun is the secret that has lured Siegfried from her.

It is arranged that because of the wrongs of Gunther and Brynhildr Siegfried must fall, and Hagen plans the details of the murder. He says that the death shall be at the hunt next day, and that it shall be said that a wild boar struck him and killed him.

As has been before said, the union of Siegfried and Brynhildr is typical of a period of peace, the peace of victory, in which the world

grows to understand the true riches of wisdom. A similar period, in Scripture, is called the Millenium, or the thousand years of peace. We are told in the Scriptures that during this period Satan, with the powers of evil, shall be bound, but that afterwards he shall roam the earth once more. Then will come the end.

Before this union that signifies peace, as the story relates, Siegfried slays Mimi (deceit and hypocrisy), and Fafnir (desire grown to grossness and greed), but Alberic has ever hidden from him, and escaped destruction. He knows not of Alberic, who typifies "envy, hatred, and malice," nor of Alberic's son Hagen, his faithful offspring whose appearance upon earth, Erda prophesied, was to be the sign that the end of the world was nigh.

The world-hero, having received the highest wisdom, has entered the arena of the world, and there has met, in their aggregated force, the same elements that meet every individual of his race, — the devil, the world, and the flesh. By each has he been beguiled, and by each has Brynhildr, as that which is highest in ideal, been sacrificed within the market-place. But now the end of these things draws nigh.

CHAPTER III

THE RESTORATION OF THE RHINE-GOLD

(ACT III)

THE gods' career is reaching to its close. The Rhine-daughters are once more elate and joyous, thinking that they will recover their gold and that gladness and light will again be their portion. They recall their one-time happiness and buoyancy, when the glittering sun-rays fell upon the shining gold, and in their joy they call to the hero through whose means it shall be restored to them.

A gleeful horn sounds among the hills. The hero comes! The Rhine-maidens plunge into the depths of the Rhine to take counsel with each other. Siegfried, in full armor, appears upon the bank of the Rhine, having lost his way. Perplexed, he knows not which path to take. The Rhine-maidens rise to the surface of the water and gently call "Siegfried!" They

ply him with queries. What has annoyed him? What has aggrieved him? Is he troubled by a gnome? They adjure him to speak with them.

He answers that the bear he has been pursuing has probably been enticed by them and their tricks, and, if the bear be their lover, he shall be left with them. Woglinda asks what boon he will grant if they will give him up. Siegfried has naught to offer but empty hands. Wellgunda sees the golden circlet upon his finger, and all with one voice ask for that—for the Ring!

Siegfried answers that he has slain the dragon and obtained that Ring, and that he cannot exchange it for a bear. All decry such meanness, and deplore that he is not more free-handed. But his wife would, he declares, be justly angry were he to waste his goods upon them.

They laugh at him because he seems afraid of his spouse, and he thinks he will leave them to their merriment. Recounting his many charms, and regretting that he is miserly, they disappear. Siegfried desires their good-will, and, as the Ring to him is but a trifle, he calls to them that if they will return he will give it to them.

Once more they appear, but they have lost their gleesome mood. They know that they may not take the Ring until the time that

marks the disappearance of the old order. They counsel the youth to care for it well till all the ill-luck is ended that, as a curse, goes with the Ring, and tell him that gladness will fill his heart when he is free from its ban.

Siegfried, who has been in the act of giving the Ring to them, returns it to his finger. He asks that they sing to him all that they know of the golden circlet. So they sing that through it sorrow will come to him, and that he holds it for ill; they tell its story—how it was wrought by the dwarf, stolen by Wotan, and held by the dragon. They tell, too, of the curse which all who keep it shall feel; and they add that as the dragon has fallen, so shall Siegfried himself fall that day. Nothing but t e waters of the Rhine may break the spell that the Ring casts.

Siegfried is impatient, and will not listen to their allurements or their threats. They assure him that they speak truly, and implore him to turn from its baleful influence, which has been woven by the Nornir in the night-time into their wonderful rope of runes.

But Siegfried's sword has shattered a spear and slaughtered a dragon, and if within their rope of runes the Nornir have woven a curse, "the sword shall cut for the Nornir." The dragon has told Siegfried of this danger, but bade him to fear nothing. The Ring means the power and wealth of the world, yet Sieg-

fried would give it for a glance of love, while threats could accomplish nothing. He would lose life and limb rather than be fettered without love.

The sisters talk among themselves, saying that, fancying himself wise, Siegfried is very dull; thinking himself free he is really trammelled; having "sworn oaths," he "has heeded them not"; and that having gained a "noble gift," he values it not. They bid him farewell, telling him that "a stately woman" shall that day possess his Ring, and that to her they will look for its return.

Siegfried smiles after the pretty creatures, and thinks that, whether on water or on land, women's ways are all alike, and that he is learning them well. Were Gudrun not his wife he would win one of these water-sprites.

The horns are now heard and the hunters appear over the hill with laughter and greetings. At last they have found Siegfried. They encamp near the Rhine, and accuse the young hero of having frightened off their game. They ask him also what he has found. He replies that he has found nothing but "water-fowl"—three fair, wild, young water-maids, who have told him that before night he must die.

At this Gunther and Hagen look darkly at each other, but Hagen turns aside the remark to mean that, seeking game, he will be struck

down by it. They seat themselves to rest after the chase, with wine and drinking vessels quite near. Hagen asks if it be true, as has been said, that Siegfried knows the language of the birds, and can understand their songs.

Siegfried answers that it is long since their prattle passed away from him. He then brings Gunther a horn of wine and begs him to drink it in sign of their blood-brotherhood.

Gunther is very gloomy. The wine seems weak, and in it he sees only Siegfried's blood. Siegfried then begs to mingle his own wine with it, and pours it with his own, so that it flows over upon the ground. This Siegfried calls "an offering to mother earth." Gunther sighs and Siegfried thinks that Brynhildr's frowns have made him gloomy.

Hagen says that Gunther cannot read his wife's thoughts as well as Siegfried can read the birds. The young hero, for his part, admits that since he has heard "the songs of women" he cares not for the songs of birds. Hagen once more asks if it be really true that Siegfried knows the language of birds.

Looking at the gloomy Gunther, Siegfried thinks that his stories will amuse him, and he therefore offers to sing the songs of his early life. So he sings the story of his home with Mimi, who fostered him that, through his strength, the dragon might be killed and the

Ring obtained; of how he had been accustomed to the smithy, and of how, as pupil, he had forged from the splintered fragments of a sword a brave new one, when all the efforts of his teacher had ended in failure to do the like. He tells also that, with this sword, he had slain Fafnir, the dragon, and that, when some of the dragon's blood had touched his hand by accident, he had placed his hand to his mouth to stop the smarting of the flesh, and at once knew all that the birds sang. One of the birds, he continued, sang that he had now won the hoard of the Nibelung, and told him where to find it, and that he learned in the same way of the wonders of the tarn-helmet, and of the Ring, with which he might conquer the world.

Hagen asks if he secured the tarn-helmet and the Ring, but the vassals are importunate for more about the talk of the birds.

Siegfried continues to relate that he took the Ring and the tarn-helmet, and that the bird warned him to put no trust in Mimi, whom it described as a "treacherous elf," who was lying in wait to kill him. And Mimi, he added, at once proved the truth of the bird's song by coming to him with a brew of poison, after which, with his brave, true sword, he slew the dwarf.

The vassals are not yet satisfied, and Hagen squeezes the juice of an herb into Siegfried's

horn "to awaken remembrance." Drinking, he goes on with his story. He sat in grief, he said, because he was friendless. The bird sang with joy and told him of a lovely maiden, who slept upon a mountain rock, and whom Siegfried was to woo and win. And the little songster told him also that she was surrounded by flames, and that none but the bravest among men could ever dare to pass those walls of fire. To these walls, Siegfried said, he swiftly made his way, and found this wondrous maiden asleep, "in suit of mirror-like mail." Unloosening her armor, he concludes, he awakened her with a kiss, and Brynhildr was his own. And as he finishes his tale, two ravens fly overhead. They are Wotan's ravens, birds of omen, and they fly forth from Valhalla and back with information gathered for him.

Gunther hears the story with amazement, and the vassals are speechless, but before they can recover themselves, Hagen, saying that the ravens have stirred revenge in him, plunges his spear into Siegfried's back. Siegfried tries to defend himself with his shield, Brynhildr's shield, but it falls backward and he falls helplessly upon it. The vassals and Gunther shout with horror at the dreadful deed, but with the one word "Retribution" Hagen disappears among the hills. Gunther is seized with remorse and anguish, and it is quite apparent to

the vassals that a great wrong has been committed against Siegfried and Brynhildr. They gather around him in sorrow.

Siegfried opens his eyes, his soul filled with blissful remembrance of Brynhildr. Again his fancy dwells upon the incidents of her awakening, their rapturous meeting, their ecstatic union, and he is filled with the most exalted emotion. His soul is at last released from the world and returns to Brynhildr. She beckons to him; again they are one. And Siegfried's eyes are closed to all that is transient, and he beholds earthly things no more. Borne upon the shield given him by Brynhildr, his body is carried by the vassals to the hall of the Gibichungs.

Darkness has fallen and Gudrun watches for Siegfried. She has been startled from her slumbers by uneasy visions. She fears Brynhildr and looks vainly for her. She now thinks that a shadow that she saw passing toward the Rhine must have been that maiden. She hears the voice of Hagen calling to them to awaken and receive the "fair booty," for that the "stalwart hero," Siegfried, is returning, the victim of a wild boar's thrust. Siegfried's body is placed in the hall, and Gudrun swoons upon it, after forcing Gunther aside and calling him the assassin of Siegfried.

Gunther denies this accusation and places

justly the blame upon Hagen, "the wild boar" who has slain Siegfried. Hagen admits this to be true and demands the Ring as the price of the deed. Gunther claims it for his own as the dower of Gudrun, and Hagen makes the same claim by Alberic's right.

There is now a general conflict, in which Gunther is slain by Hagen. The latter then reaches for the Ring, but draws back in awe as the hand of Siegfried rises in solemn reproof. With grave and dignified presence, Brynhildr also appears, lamenting that none grieves for Siegfried himself, while all wrangle for his possessions.

Gudrun, who yet considers herself the wife of Siegfried, accuses Brynhildr of bringing this disaster upon them. Gently, graciously, solemnly, Brynhildr tells Gudrun that never has Siegfried belonged to her save in name. That to her, Brynhildr, had his oath been sworn before he had ever come among the Gibichungs or had seen Gudrun.

Gudrun turns upon Hagen and accuses him of the love-philter, and like Gunther she too, is lost in sorrow and remorse. She, too, sees that by it both Siegfried and Brynhildr have been betrayed. She turns from the body of Siegfried to the body of Gunther, while Hagen alone is unmoved.

Siegfried is again Brynhildr's! After a period

of grief she asks the vassals to carry the body of Siegfried to the Rhine, upon whose bank they have erected a funeral pyre. She calls for her horse Grani, that it may bear her swiftly to her beloved. As she gazes upon Siegfried she is lost in reverie. He was "so true," and "yet could betray." None ever was nobler, none ever held honor higher, no love was so pure as his, she reflects, and yet every oath he swore, he broke. She calls upon the gods to know why the curse has fallen upon him for their misdoings. And while she speaks the ominous ravens hover over her head. This reminds her of all the conditions of the fatal curse, and she understands that things are thus because they must be—all that pertains to the old must pass away.

The men carry the body of Siegfried to the pyre upon the bank of the Rhine. Then Brynhildr takes from the hand of her dead hero the Ring of the Nibelung, and pledges it to the daughters of the Rhine, flame-cleansed from the curse.

Then she bids the ravens tell in Valhalla what they have heard on the Rhine. She bids that Loki be summoned from the Valkyries' Rock, and when the torch, emblem of Loki, appears, she stands ready to kindle the pyre, and doom Valhalla. Standing thus, she gives to the world, which is without a master, the treasures of her heart.

"Not goods or gold,
Or costly display,
Not house nor hall,
Nor haughtiest pomp,
Not treacherous treaties,
Trammels and bonds,
Not cruel decrees
Of custom or cant;
Kind in delight or loss,
Let but Love be your king."

Having kindled the hero's pyre, Brynhildr, mounting her steed Grani, plunges swiftly into the flames, and is reunited to Siegfried.

The Rhine is rapidly rising. It overflows its banks, and on its waves appear the graceful Rhine-maidens, asking for their gold. Hagen has not expected this, and throwing aside his armor he plunges into the water. Woglinda and Wellgunda draw him far under the wave, and he is seen no more. Flosshildr, the watchful Flosshildr, obtains the Ring. The Rhine-daughters are again joyous and glad, for their gold has been returned to them. Its soft radiance again shimmers and glows through the waters.

As the Rhine recedes, in the distance are seen the gods and heroes, drawn up in solemn phalanx around Valhalla. Even now have the flames caught its towers and battlements. Its walls blaze, they glow, they crumble, they

fall. The old has passed away! The citadel of self has fallen! *Sic transit gloria Mundi!*

It will be remembered that, as these gods were less than men or moral beings, they signifiy those qualities that are less than the moral qualities, the qualities of self. In the evolution to the highest standard, these will dissolve and vanish.

When man shall have grasped and learned to live true ideals; when every faculty, in its evolution, shall have rallied to the standard understood as the transformed will; when all the faculties act as one, with the whole man behind every act, thought will have returned to its equilibrium, and the cycle be complete. This has been a foregone conclusion.

Siegfried's vulnerability in one spot to the weapon of Hagen signifies his mortal lineage. Despite this, being also of the lineage of the "deathless Brynhildr," with her is he also proof against the fire of Loki, though Valhalla falls in its flames and the gods are destroyed

The funeral pyre of Siegfried symbolizes the transition of that which is seen into that which it unseen, through which all things become new.

The will of the world has become the transformed will, the transformed will has become the Soul of the Woman, and the Soul of the Woman, now the true will of the world, draws

nigh unto divine Will and enters its shining orbit, whither the world follows.

Henceforth ideal and expression shall be one. Henceforth Love shall be king.

And here we leave *The Ring of the Nibelung*, one of the world's great epics, upon which is set the seal of that which is Universal.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX

ETHICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF PERSONS AND THINGS IN "THE RING OF THE NIBELUNG"

Dwarfs.—The "instinctive activities."

Alberic.—"Envy, hatred and malice, and all uncharitableness."

Mimi.—Indirectness, deception, hypocrisy.

The Anvil.—Symbol of slavery and servitude.

Giants.—{ Fasolt.—Desire, lust. Fafnir.—Desire grown to greed and rapacity.

Rhine-maidens.—The gay, joyous, buoyant, innocent qualities of character.

The Gold.—Truth.

The Ring.—Truth perverted and bent to the ends of self. Also, the perfected round of mere human knowledge.

The Gods.—Those qualities of character less than moral qualities. The gods were beings who possessed moral perception without moral

power, and were therefore unable to achieve things morally excellent.

Wotan.—The generally accepted meaning of Wotan is the will. It would be more accurate to say that this god stands for movement or energy.

Fricka.—Fricka is the emblem of conservatism, conventionality, and arbitrary law with its powers and its precedents.

Loki.—God of fire. He also is the type of subtlety—the power of intellect without moral power.

(Freia and Erda do not come within this category of the gods, for they are above the control of the will.)

Freia.—Freia is the goddess of youth and beauty, who fed the gods with golden apples. In another and higher aspect the character symbolizes the pure ideal.

The Golden Apples.—Hopes, aspirations, truthful ideals.

Erda.—Earth-goddess, who embodies primal wisdom.

Valhalla.—The heavenly hall of Odin. Also the citadel of self.

Mortal Woman.—That degree of love through which the affections were developed in the human race.

Love.—The continual choosing of the higher, at each successive step, until the highest is achieved. Infinite progression.

Valkyries.—The Valkyries were the product of the will turned to wisdom and wisdom herself. They are typical of all the heroic and strenuous

virtues. Singly, their power upholds Wotan. Collectively they aid the Volsungs.

Brynhildr.—Brynhildr epitomizes all the heroic virtues, and as Wotan's transformed will she becomes "The Soul of the Woman." Brynhildr always represents the world's highest ideals.

Volsung.—Man governed from within.

Siegmund.—The heroic virtues as active in the world.

Sieglinda.—The gentle virtues as active in the world.

Siegfried.—The union of the heroic and the gentle virtues in the character of the completed moral being, introducing the epoch of universal love. Siegfried always represents the highest expression of the world's ideals.

Union of Siegfried and Brynhildr.—The world's period of universal peace.

Hunding.—Barbarism and war.

The Gibichungs.—The temptations of the world.

Ash-tree, and Fir-tree—The difference in meaning between the ash-tree and the fir-tree seems to be the difference between the deciduous and the evergreen trees, the difference between change and permanence. The fir-tree is classed in Scripture with the box and the pine and the cedar, that are the restorers of waste places. In the story of the ash-tree there is a very beautiful suggestiveness. Its roots reach to the fountain of wisdom, Erda's fountain, which gave its foliage a perennial green. All the fauna of the earth clustered beneath its shelter-

ing arms and cropped sustenance from its boughs, while all the birds of the air lived among its branches.

The Ravens.—These signify thought and memory.

The horse, Grani.—This animal stands for swiftness and despatch—qualities of the Valkyrie nature; or, in Mr. William C. Ward's opinion, "the ardent, impulsive spirit."

The Song-bird.—Intuition.

INDEX

A

Alberic, seeks the Rhine-maidens, 2; sees the gold, 3; forswears love and steals the gold, 4; analysis of character, 6, 7; exhibits his skill, 23, 27, 28; bound by Loki and Wotan, 28; freed, curses the Ring, 30, 31; at Hate-cavern, 110; wrangles with Mimi, 118; seeks an interview with Hagen, 155; deprived of representation in the world, 176.

Anvil, type of servitude, 107; cleft by Siegfried, 107.

Apples, golden, the, 10; meaning of, 182.

Ash-tree, the, Hunding's cottage built around trunk of, 51; sword in trunk of, 56; Ygdrasil, 56; sword drawn from, 61; sword fragments melted by coals from, 106; kindled the fire of Valhalla, 176.

B

Brynhildr, chief of the Valkyries, 40; as valor, 42; as Wotan's transformed will, in essence, 43; will aid the Volsung, 66; contends with Siegmund, 75, 76; pities and compassionates the Volsungs, 77 protects Sieglinda, 80–83; sentenced to sleep, 87, 88; crime of, 89; awakened by Siegfried, 131; brought to Gunther, 157; full character of, 160, 161; legacy of, 176; restores the Rhine-gold, 175; enters the fire, 176.

C

Carlyle, Thomas, citation from, vi., xiii., 22, 23, 56, 57.
Cleather, Alice Leighton, vii.; note quoted from work, 58.
Compassion, for the Volsungs, 77; announces the soul of the woman, 89; part of Brynhildr's crime, 89.
Consciousness, the human, an evolution, iii.
Crump, Basil, vii.; note quoted from work, 58.

D

Donner, defies the giants, 13; purifies the air, 35.
Dragon, Alberic becomes a, 27; Fafnir, 94.
Draupnir, the ring of Odin, 21.
Dwarfs, not moral beings, 6; represent the animal instincts, 8; enslaved by Alberic, 24; bring the treasure, 25, 29.

E

Eddas, written in Icelandic, vi.; source of the *Volsunga Saga*, 49.
Emerson, quotation from, 37.
Erda, rises from the earth, 33; typifies wisdom, 40; bears Wotan nine daughters, 40; Wotan seeks counsel of, 123.

F

Fafnir, kills Fasolt, 34; as dragon, 94; slain, 116.
Fasolt killed by Fafnir, 34.
Fir-tree, the, Brynhildr rests beneath, 88; Norns weave at, 138; meaning of, 183.
Franklin, Benjamin, v.
Freia, the goddess of youth and beauty, 10; type of the pure ideal, 10, 18; the price of Valhalla, 10; held by the giants, 16, 17; restored to the gods, 34.

Fricka, beholds Valhalla, 9; covets the gold, 15; type of conventionality, 18; the will's compromise, 19; confronts Wotan, 66; condemns the Volsungs, 67–69.
Froh, defies the giants, 13; helps pile the treasure, 32; evokes the rainbow-bridge, 35.

G

Giants, the, build Valhalla, 10; demand their pay, 12; learn of the Rhine-gold, 15; covet the treasure, 16; hold Freia as hostage, 16; lose salvation, 19; receive treasure in place of Freia, 34; lose sight of love, 34; are themselves lost, 34.
Gibichungs, home of, 144; temptations of the world, 144, 165, 183.
Gods, the, two fears of, 10; temporarily lose Freia, 16; enter Valhalla, 36; morally less than man, 39; destroyed, 176.
Gold, the, guarded by the Rhine-maidens, 2; worshipped by them, 3; stolen by Alberic, 4; highest known symbol of value, 6; meaning of the theft of, 8; changed into a ring, 16, 21; meaning of, 22; restored to the river-maidens, 176.
Grani, the horse, awakened by Siegfried, 132; gift to Siegfried, 142; bears Brynhildr into the fire, 176; meaning of, 184.
Gudrun, offers the potion, 148; weds Siegfried, 158; repentant, 174.
Gunther, receives Siegfried, 146; swears the oath, 149; receives Brynhildr, 157; remorse, 172; slain, 174.

H

Hagen, 144; instigates the love-potion, 146; plots Siegfried's death, 163; kills Siegfried, 172; death of, 176.

Hero, the, self-governed, 40; Volsung, announced, 83; of new epoch, 93; comes to the Valkyries' Rock, 129.
Hunding, anger towards Siegmund, 56; death of, 78.

L

Lavignac, Albert, quotation from, 58.
Loki, god of fire and diplomat of lower world, 13; approves Valhalla, 14; tells of the stolen Rhine-gold, 15; plots its possession, 16; enters the underworld, 17, 22; binds Alberic and takes the tarn-helmet, 28; helps pile the treasure, 32; on duty at Valkyries' Rock, 88; summoned by Brynhildr, 175.
Love, typified by woman, 42, 43; forsworn by Alberic, 4; lost by the giants, 34; followed by Wotan, 16; understood by Siegmund, 60, 61; as here conceived, 16; universal, 63; efflorescence of the moral evolution, 63; almost achieved by Siegfried, 133; completed by Brynhildr, 176.
Love-potion, ulterior motive, the basis of, 52; interposing circumstance, the meaning of, 153.

M

Meister, The, a Wagnerian quarterly, vi.
Mimi, forges the tarn-helmet, 22; disciplined by Alberic, 23; talks with Wotan and Loki, 24; rears Siegfried, 94; trial of wit with the Wanderer, 100; brews the poison, 106; encounters Alberic, 118; slain by Siegfried, 121.
Moral Power, desired by Wotan for new race, 39; evolution of, 62–64.
Moses, v.
Music Dramas of Trilogy, advancement of the thought of the world, iii.; how written, viii.; present new features, xi.; an intelligible whole, xiv.
Mythology, the Norse, remnant of an old religion, 5; compared with Greek and Roman, 9; recognition of a superior power in, 17.

N

Nornir, the, daughters of Erda, 33; at the Valkyries' Rock, 135.

O

Odin, traits of, xiii.; myth concerning, 11; the ring of, 21.

P

Personifications, American, compared with characters of Trilogy, iv.
Pity, for the Volsungs, 77; announces the soul of the woman, 89; part of Brynhildr's crime, 89.
Principles, moral, underlying our national life, iv.
Prophets, the, v.
Proverbs of Solomon, 41.
Pyre of Siegfried, erected, 175; kindled, 176; what it symbolizes, 177.

R

Rainbow-bridge, the, 35.
Ravens, the, hinder the song-bird, 128; flutter over Brynhildr's head, 175; what they signify, 184.
Rhine, the, meaning of, 1; home of the Rhine-gold, 2; site of Valhalla, 9; kingdom of the Gibichungs on banks of, 144.
Rhine-daughters, the, guardians of the gold, 2; reveal worth of gold to Alberic, 3; lose the treasure, 4; despair of, 4; symbolize childhood, 6; delineation of character, 8; appeal to Wotan, 15; call to Siegfried, 166; refuse the Ring, 167; receive their gold, 176.
Ring, the, forged by Alberic, 16; taken by Wotan, 30; cursed by Alberic, 30, 31; relinquished by Wotan, 34; possessed by the giants, 34; obtained by Siegfried, 119; worn by

Brynhildr, 141; taken from her by Siegfried, 153; pledged by her to the daughters of the Rhine, 175; restored to the Rhine-maidens, 176.

Ring of the Nibelung, The, Wagnerian Trilogy, iii.

S

Salvation, 19.

Shakespeare, v.

Shaw, Bernard, cited in note, 59.

Siegfried, hero of new epoch, 93; ward of Mimi, 94; welds the sword, 105; cleaves the anvil, 107; the completed moral being, 109; slays the dragon, 116; slays Mimi, 121; shatters the spear, 129; awakens Brynhildr, 131; enters the world, 146; drinks the love-potion, 148; swears the oath, 149; goes up the Rhine, 149; brings Brynhildr, 157; weds Gudrun, 158; death plotted, 163; slain, 172; reunited to Brynhildr, 173.

Sieglinda, twin to Siegmund, vi.; feminine in thought, vi.; meaning of name, 42; type of the gentle virtues in the world, 50; wife of Hunding, 51; offers horn of mead, 52; points out sword, 56; story of, 58; names Siegmund, 61; flight, 62; protected by Brynhildr, 77; goes to the forest, 83; mother of Siegfried, 98.

Siegmund, the Volsung, vi.; masculine in thought, vi.; meaning of name, 42; type of heroic virtues in the world, 50, 62; in Hunding's cottage, 51; drinks the horn of mead, 52; story of, 54, 55; incurs Hunding's anger, 56; draws the sword from tree, 61; receives his name, 61; relationship known, 61; flight, 62; condemned by Fricka, 70; beholds Brynhildr, 75; death of, 78.

Song-bird, the, 118–122.

Soul of the Woman, the, announced by pity and compassion, 89; evolution of, 177; draws nigh unto divine Will, 177.

Spear, Wotan's, 78; haft of, 78; shatters sword, 78; is itself shattered, 129.

Spring, the awakening of, 64.
Sword, the, note concerning, 58, 59; story of, 58, 59; drawn from the tree by Siegmund, 61; shattered by Wotan, 78; meaning of, 79; welded by Siegfried, 105.

T

Tarn-helmet, the, symbol of the wish, 22; forged by Mimi, 22; tested by Alberic, 23, 27, 28; stolen by Loki, 28; possessed by the giants, 32; obtained by Siegfried, 119; worn on his quest up the Rhine, 153.
Trilogy, Wagnerian, story of man's ethical progress, iii.; queries concerning characters of, iv.; in its moral aspect, v.; based upon the *Volsung Saga*, vi.; manner in which written, vii., viii.; comparison with Scripture, v.

U

Universal, the, underlying principle of Wagner's work, xii.; seal of, placed upon the Trilogy, 178.

V

Valhalla, built by the giants, 10; accepted by Wotan, 10; price of, 10; meaning of, 19; entered by the gods, 36; destroyed, 176, 177.
Valkyries, the, daughters of Erda and Wotan, 40; characterization of, 41; typify the heroic virtues, 41; at the Valkyries' Rock, 80–85.
Valtraute, seeks Brynhildr, 150.
Volsunga Saga, vi.

W

Wagner, Richard, Trilogy, v.; quotations from letters of, vii., viii., ix.; in exile, ix.; dramas of, xi.
Ward, William C., author of *The Nibelung's Ring*, vi.; cited, 184.

Woman, the new standard, 14; Wotan seeks human, 42; typifies, 42, 43; the soul of the, 89.

Wotan, beholds Valhalla, 9; dilemma of, 12; desires the Rhine-gold, 15; enters lower world, 17, 22; represents the will, 18; binds Alberic, 28; takes the Ring, 30; confronted by Erda, 33; relinquishes the Ring, 34; evolves a new plan, 36; enters Valhalla, 36; confronted by Fricka, 66; despairing, 69–73; sentences Siegmund, 70; anger of, 74; wrath of, 78, 83; sentences Brynhildr, 87, 88; as Wanderer, 100; at Hate-cavern, 110; seeks Erda, 123; meets Siegfried, 125; end of, 176.

Y

Ygdrasil, 56.